MARGERY MORRIS—MASCOT

VIOLET GORDON GRAY

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"DON'T YOU WANT TO COME?"

MARGERY MORRIS-MASCOT

By

VIOLET GORDON GRAY

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Margery Morris, Mascot

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To

MY MOTHER

Introduction

An earlier book, "Margery Morris," told the story of the experiences of a young girl in a quaint old Quaker town in New Jersey. It told of the friends she made, the fun and mishaps she had, and of the great surprise she received at the end.

Much against her will she had come to visit her grandfather whom she had not seen since she was a child, and her visit did not begin happily. But the kindly welcome of the old housekeeper, the jolly comradeship of the two boy cousins and the friendship of a girl of her own age, Polly Jameson, helped to remedy her discontent. Events occurred which caused her distress and finally a strange discovery. Through her own trouble she learned the truth of a verse the old doctor taught her:

"Two things stand like stone,
Kindness in your neighbor's trouble,
Courage in your own."

The second book, "Margery Morris, Mascot," is an account of the winter and spring that follow the events in the first book. Margery, who longs for a career, hits upon the unassuming one of "mascot," and decides to bring all the happiness she can into the lives of others. This, however, turns out to be not quite so simple as it seems. Ludicrous mishaps follow some of her well-intentioned efforts, others of them are misunderstood and she suffers embarrassment and trial. She struggles on, however, doing her best, until just as she is on the point of giving way to discouragement, a final resolution to stick it out and play the game brings her success and happiness once more.

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Margery Morris, Mascot

Margery Morris, Mascot

CHAPTER I

SKATING

One knee on the top rail of the fence by the roadway, Margery Morris paused to watch the skaters on the creek.

The first really good skating of the winter had brought out the boys and girls of Renwyck's Town in full force, and according to a time-honored custom they had gathered where the creek made a wide bend through the farm belonging to Dick Ball's grandfather.

It was Margery's first experience of a country winter, and to-day was to mark her initial appearance in public as a skater. Ever since the ice had been strong enough she had been practicing privately on the branch of the creek that ran through her grandfather's place, under the instruction of Hector, the gardener's assistant.

She had progressed to the point where she

could take at least three strokes of quite professional skill. After that, her feet, as though overcome by the brilliancy of their own performance, would take charge of affairs and suddenly crossing in front of her would keep on crossing until only the manful efforts of the faithful Hector kept her from being seated on the ground with more violence and haste than was desirable. Occasionally, Hector, whose build was not as heroic as his name, would find himself unable to cope with the situation as thrust upon him and they both would take a tumble; Hector as a rule, fortunately for Margery and unfortunately for himself, underneath.

Margery, perched on the fence, rubbed her elbow, already bruised and aching, with sorrowful anticipation. She had made up her mind, however, to become an accomplished skater; so with a bound she cleared the top rail and landed in the field. Her skates clanking beside her, she ran along the path, beaten hard through the snowy meadow, to the row of giant old willow trees marking the edge of the creek. The clang of the skates on the ice, the shouts of the skaters rang clearly

through the frosty air. Resting on the fallen trunk of one of the willows she found a group of flushed and laughing boys and girls. Her pet, little Benjamin Ball, and the rest of the smaller fry made the most of their opportunities and skated gloriously out into the middle of the creek, a place untenable for them when occupied by longer-legged, stronger boys and recklessly flourished hockey sticks.

"Oh, hello! There's Margery!" cried her especial friend Polly Jameson, as Margery came in sight.

Sam Bennet got up and offered her his place on the log. "Glad you've come," he declared. "I see you have your skates—good for you. I'll put them on for you."

"Come on, Margie," said Polly Jameson as soon as the skates were on. "Let's skate down to the turn and back."

Hand in hand with Polly, Margery started off bravely, only a moment or two later to cross her feet with almost fatal effect.

"Whoa!" laughed Polly, holding her up. "What are you trying to do? Sam, come here and hold Margery up on the other side. Now then—one, two, three."

Sam obligingly seized Margery by the other arm, and they made a trip down to the turn and back with flying colors.

"That's fine," encouraged Polly. "Keep it up, and you'll be a champion skater. All right, Dick," as a tall blond boy joined them, "I'll race you down to the turn. Consider yourself beaten already."

Polly darted off, and Sam gallantly took up the task of filling Hector's place as instructor, and, in case of a tumble, as mat. But a long-legged youth with wing-like ears who was demonstrating the chicken-bill star, not to mention the Maltese cross and the double grape-vine, proved a tempter. After an agonized endeavor on Sam's part to fulfil his duty as he saw it and stick by Margery, he found the attraction too great and drifted off across the creek.

Left alone, Margery stood still and looked about her. Down by the turn she could see Polly's scarlet tam-o'-shanter, and close behind it Dick Ball's dark blue skating cap. Across the creek Sam Bennet and a group of boys were describing circles with their left legs and marvelous loops with their right;

while skating easily and gracefully along the creek in the opposite direction were her friends Esther Crowell and Sally Watson, in a long line with two or three other girls and those of the lads who had not succumbed to the spell of Sam's long-legged, wing-eared tempter.

Nearer shore, Benjamin and his small friends struggled happily. Falling down with shouts of delighted laughter after every third stroke or so, they picked themselves up, only to fall down again. "See me!" they would shout. "Wasn't it funny the way I sat down?"

Those of them who had no skates found life still satisfactory, for they had manufactured a slide of such an impossible state of slipperiness that they fell down with a rapidity and amusingness quite as certain as that of their friends on runners.

"I wish some of the other girls had come," sighed Margery. "Some of the greenhorns like me." A little timidly she struck out for herself. All went well at first, and with short, choppy strokes she managed to reach the middle of the creek. There her feet betrayed her again, and she came down full length on the

back of her head; a tumble that might have been serious had it not been for her thick curls and her heavy woolen skating cap.

Her head spinning from her fall, she struggled to her knees and then cautiously managed to regain her feet. As she stood up the long line of skaters with Esther and Sally in the center swept past her.

"Hello, Margie," cried Esther over her shoulder. "Come along."

"Yes, do," echoed Sally.

The boy at the end of the line dropped back and held out his hand. "Hurry up—catch on," he called.

Margery shook her head. "I can't," she answered despairingly.

"Don't you want to come?" called back Esther.

Margery shook her head again. "I can't!" she tried to explain.

Not comprehending that Margery's refusal came from a lack of ability and not from a lack of inclination, the line swept on. Billy Hedges, the boy who had held out his hand to her, evidently feeling himself rebuffed, hastened to catch up with the rest without

another look at poor Margery. He was already suspicious of her as a city girl and the granddaughter of the wealthy Henry Morris, and perhaps a little "stuck up."

As the other skaters passed, Sam and his group of boys closed in around her, a vigorous, rushing, shouting horde. Taking short, timid clumping steps, for she still felt jarred from her fall, Margery started to make her way through the throng to the side of the creek where were the small fry. A youth skating backwards bumped into her and almost knocked her down. He hastily apologized and skated off, and she clumped back to her little oasis of safety to wait for another opening.

"Why so superior, Pegs?" said a voice at her elbow. "Why aren't you skating with anybody?"

"Oh, Dick, I'm so glad you've come! I'm stuck here. Won't you take me to the edge?"

"Why, what's the matter? Don't you know how to skate?"

"Not very well. Don't tell a soul—I'm getting Hector to teach me." She laughed a

little in spite of herself. "Poor Hector,—I fall down on him so much that I'm afraid that there will be nothing left of him!"

"I won't let you fall. Come along, there's a nice quiet place down the creek there. Give me your hands. Strike out with your right foot. That's fine! Steady! Now then."

Dick Ball skated exceptionally well. With his strong steady grasp he held Margery up, and together they fairly flew down the creek.

"Oh, that was perfect!" cried Margery breathlessly, as they paused to rest in the lea of a spreading pine-tree. "Don't you love to feel the wind in your face?"

"Did you see Polly skating?" asked Dick as they crossed hands and started up the creek again. "She's a fine skater."

"Polly does everything well," Margery declared enthusiastically. "Dick," she added with a laugh, "do you remember when I first came to Renwyck's Town—how angry I was because I had to come?"

"Do I?" chuckled Dick.

"Shouldn't I have missed a lot if I had stayed in San Francisco? Think of not

knowing Polly! And of not being with Grandpapa!"

"Your being here means a lot to him, I imagine. He told my grandfather the other day that in spite of his ill-health he feels ten years younger. He said, too, that you bring a lot of life and fun to the house."

They stopped to watch some crows clustered in the branches of a low stunted pine-tree on the other side of the creek.

"I like to hear the crows," observed Margery as Dick swung her round and they started down toward the bend. "They sound so wintry."

"Oh, what do you suppose is going to happen at our house?" exclaimed Dick suddenly. "I forgot to tell you."

"Something nice, I hope," Margery answered somewhat doubtfully; she knew the peculiarities of Dick's grandfather and how hard a path Dick, at times, had to tread.

"Bunnie is going to arrive next week!"

"'Bunnie'? Oh, you mean your cousin Elizabeth Morris?—the one I was supposed to be?"

"The same. Grandfather had it all ar-

ranged before he told us a word about it. He's as pleased as a dog with side-pockets."

"Are you pleased?" asked Margery quickly.

Dick laughed. "I'll tell you that when I've seen her," he answered with his usual caution. "I've managed to like one Mr. Henry Morris's granddaughter,—I hope I like the other Mr. Henry Morris's granddaughter as well. It *is* funny, isn't it, both our grandfathers being named Henry Morris?"

His gaze wandered up the creek where the boys were starting a game of crack-the-whip. Somewhat sensitive as to her limitations as a skating partner and still bothered by her aching head, Margery suggested that Dick take her back to the log, where she could rest while he went off to join the other lads.

Dick escorted her up the creek to the edge, where she clumped her way to the log. There, with a long sigh of weariness, she sank down, her feet heavy with her skates sticking forlornly out in front of her. The shadows lengthened as the winter's afternoon drew on and the air grew colder. Shivering, Margery pulled on over her sweater the warm outer

coat she had discarded when she began to skate, and plunged her hands deep in its pockets. With wistful eyes she watched the gay, agile throng. Several of the boys and girls came to ask her to skate with them but she shook her head.

"No, thank you," she declined. "I'm 'all out of puff,' as Benjie Ball says."

A little figure detached itself from the group of youngsters sliding near by and made its way toward her. "I fell down and hurt my knee," Benjamin lamented. "See,—I've tored my stocking."

Delighted to see her favorite, Margery made room for him beside her and slipping off her coat wrapped it around them both, lest Benjamin, overheated, should take cold.

"I like you, Margie," observed Benjamin, contentedly munching the chocolate Margery had found in one of her coat pockets. "My cousin Bunnie is coming to visit us, and maybe she'll be pretty and nice like you. But I shan't love her as much as I do you, Margie."

Margery promptly kissed him, to his wriggling discomfiture. He adored Margery, but

he preferred her caresses when his chum Reggie Smedly was not at hand.

The energetic honking of an automobile horn cut short Benjamin's embarrassment. Hastily taking off her skates, Margery hurried up the path to the waiting car.

After the wintry fields and bleak, frozen roads, she was glad to see the lights of her grandfather's big, comfortable house streaming out across garden and lawn. A generous fire was blazing in the hall fireplace; pulling off her gloves, Margery fell on her knees and held out her hands to the welcome blaze.

"Is that you, Margery?" called a voice from the library.

"Yes, Grandpapa." Picking up her skates, Margery slid across the polished floor to the library door. "I've had such a funny time!" she announced to the white-haired man sitting by a tall reading lamp. "But I fell down and gave my head a crack," she added with a rueful rub of the back of her head.

Her grandfather took off his glasses. "Tell me about it," he smiled.

Obligingly, Margery plumped down on the big davenport and, her arm around the neck

of the mastiff curled up there, recounted her experiences and mishaps of the afternoon.

It was such an obviously stiff and bruised girl that dragged herself to bed that night, that Miss Tucker, the trained nurse attending Mr. Morris's convalescence, insisted on rubbing her with liniment.

"I'm afraid, Miss Tucker, that you are going to have a steady job before you of first aid to the injured," sighed Margery. "Grandpapa has promised to have that funny little lawn back of the house flooded—it'll freeze over and I can skate there when the ice isn't thick enough on the creek. And then—I'm going to learn to skate really well."

Miss Tucker had been an amused spectator at some of Margery's performances with Hector. Now she laughed. "How will you learn to be a 'really' good skater?" she asked.

"By getting up every time I fall down," answered Margery with characteristic determination.

CHAPTER II

SAM APPEARS

"MOTHER, don't you think it would be a fine idea if I were to give a party to-night?"

Mrs. Jameson raised startled eyes from the letter she was writing. "A party?" she repeated helplessly, gazing at her tall young daughter standing by the fireplace. "Dear child! To-night?"

Polly gave a vigorous thrust with the poker at the back-log, watched the suddenly mounting flame critically for a moment, then turned again to her mother.

"Please, Mother," she begged. "Not a really-truly-black-and-bluely, ice-cream-and-chicken-salad, invitations-out-for-a-month-ahead sort of party! Just the wee-est little party anybody could possibly imagine. Without one bit of fuss and feathers!"

Her first apprehension relieved, Mrs. Jameson's mind went back to her letter. "Umm, yes,—oh, very well. Have it if you want to,

dear," she answered absently. "I must finish this letter to Aunt Helen,—it ought to have been written two weeks ago. Whom are you going to have at your party?" she added hastily as Polly went to the telephone stand in the corner.

"First and foremost, Elizabeth, alias Bunnie, Morris."

"Who on earth is Bunnie Morris?"

"Oh, don't you remember, Mother? I told you at luncheon that Dick's cousin arrived in Renwyck's Town last night."

"Oh, yes, of course! It had slipped my mind."

"Well, I thought that it would be a good scheme to have Margery and Esther and some of the others to meet her. In case she's feeling lonely. Don't you remember how hard it was for Margery at school at first?"

"Margery has taken her place pretty well, now, hasn't she?"

"Yes, indeed," Polly assented eagerly, "Margery is ever so popular. She deserves to be. I can't imagine Margery doing a mean thing."

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Jameson, "there's some-

thing very direct and honest about Margery. And now to get to business, dear. If you are going to have these young people here, you must have something for them to do. And something hot to drink, for they will need it before they drive home on a cold night like this. Missouri shows every sign of developing a 'misery in her haid,' and it is Hannah's night out, remember; so you will have to look after the refreshments yourself. And you will have to arrange to spend the evening in the front room—see that there is wood for the open fire. Your father wants this room,—he is going to have a meeting of the vestry here this evening."

"All right, Mother, I'll look after everything. Hot chocolate and sandwiches would be nice,—don't you think so? I don't know exactly what we can do to amuse ourselves—charades or something, I suppose. The chief thing is to have something to break the ice at the beginning. Wouldn't it be a good idea if I were to ask Margery in to spend the night? She could help me plan things. Please, Mother. It's Friday night, remember, Mother. And I promise we won't talk late."

"Very well, child. Now do let me finish this letter. I feel as though I should never have it written!"

Polly resumed her telephoning, and Mrs. Jameson made another attempt at her correspondence.

"That's all right," Polly announced hanging up the receiver. "Dick and Bunnie can come. I wonder what she looks like. Small and plump and very blond, I somehow imagine. Now for Margery."

The conversation with Margery was evidently highly satisfactory to judge from the ecstatic squeals to which Polly gave vent. Mrs. Jameson looked up from her letter and smiled in sympathy. "How happy those youngsters are," she thought. "And how care-free! But, oh dear, they are growing up. I really must lengthen Polly's skirts!"

"Margery is coming, Mother. Isn't that fine? But she's playing chess with her grandfather, and she thinks she oughtn't to leave him until he's tired of it. Isn't she devoted to him?"

"It's a very good thing she is. Mr. Morris needed her. He had been a recluse too long."

"The White House Farm does seem a different place with Margery there, doesn't it? Now for Esther and Sam and Billy Hedges. Shall I ask Harry Richards?"

"Harry Richards? What is he doing at home?"

"Rusticating, I suppose. I saw his mother on the way home from school to-day. She didn't look awfully cheerful and I gathered from what she said that Harry had been in another scrape at boarding-school."

Mrs. Jameson frowned slightly. "I'm not an ardent admirer of that young gentleman. However, as we don't know that he is suspended from school, and as his mother is so quick to resent any apparent slight, perhaps we had better invite him."

"Harry is out," Polly announced a few minutes later, "but his mother accepts for him 'with pleasure.' So that is settled. Now for the eats."

"For the what, Polly?" inquired Mrs. Jameson, reprovingly. She was waging a gallant, if at times unsuccessful, campaign against slang.

"The victuals, then," explained Polly

tranquilly, "since you insist on elegance in language."

Mrs. Jameson laughed. "Run along, you bad child."

"Where, oh where has my little dog gone?" warbled Polly happily, if tunelessly, as she went down the long old-fashioned hall through the pleasant dining-room to the pantry, where a stout colored woman was beating eggs with tornadic energy.

"Missouri," she began, "I'm going to have a few boys and girls here this evening, and I want to make some sandwiches. May I have the materials now?"

Missouri rolled a black and majestic eye at her. "Ah'se got a misery in my haid," she said with an air of finality. "Ah didn't gib up de finest wash practice in Renwyck's Town ter hab young ladies a-traipsin' in mah pantry."

A neat young colored girl appeared from the kitchen. "Ah'll git the things fer you, Miss Polly," she said softly. "But ah reckon yer'd bettah make de sandwidges in de din-in'-room."

Polly laughed and retreated discreetly.

The coal fire in the dining-room grate was

burning brightly and the room was warm and cozy. Outside, the snow was falling steadily, banking up against the window-panes and covering the tall shrubs by the side-veranda. Polly paused to look out of the window. She loved the old garden planted and laid out by her great-grandmother. From the days when her baby hands had snatched off the heads of the dandelions in the grass under the happy impression that she was "pickin' flowers for de Mam-ma" to the past summer when she had dug and planted with the born gardener's success, some of her happiest hours had been spent within its box-borders. With a little sigh of satisfaction she turned from the window and, taking up the bread-knife, went to work.

"East, west, hame *is* best," she sang.

The short winter afternoon rapidly drifted into twilight, and the room grew dim save for the fire. As Polly finished the last sandwich and spread a napkin over the plate, there was a sudden peal at the front door-bell. "I'll go, Hannah," she cried, jumping to her feet and running down the hall. "I think that it's Miss Margery Morris."

With eager fingers she turned the heavy, old-fashioned door-knob and opened the door. On the step outside, dancing rapidly from foot to foot, her fur cap and dark coat covered with snow, stood Margery.

Polly reached out a long arm and dragged her in. "Oh, Marge," she cried, "I'm so glad you've come! Aren't you happy that it's snowing? Did you finish your game of chess? Have you seen Dick's cousin yet? Do you know any new game we can play to-night?"

"Yes. No. Yes," answered Margery at random, shaking the snow from her cap.

Polly laughed. "Po' lil' lamb!—didn't she have time to answer um's questions? Well, come up to my room, and I'll ask the questions over again, more slowly."

She picked up Margery's bag and they went up the stairs together.

"Why, Polly," Margery exclaimed as they entered the door, "what have you done to your room? It looks different."

"Simply got to work yesterday and cleared away all the trash,—and delighted Mother's heart. Your room looks so well without ten

million pennants and pictures pinned up, and snap-shots all over everything, that I decided to take mine down. Then I put all the furniture that doesn't match the bed and dressing-table in the storeroom. Do you remember that funny little gilt sofa that always looked as though it were going to break down? Mother is going to get me some hollyhock cretonne for window-valances and chair-covers. What are you going to wear to-night?"

As the two girls had not seen each other since school closed for the day, nearly five hours before, they had an endless amount to chatter about, and dinner was ready before they were dressed.

Soon after dinner the nine dignified gentlemen who, with Mr. Jameson, comprised the vestry of old St. Peter's, began to arrive and were ushered into the library, where their voices could be heard in the vast amount of discussion evidently necessary to settle the limited affairs of the parish.

In the front living-room, Margery and Polly lighted lamps and cleared the big center-table for games. Just as Polly had

settled a pot of azaleas to her satisfaction on the piano after having carried it three times around the room and tried its effect on every piece of furniture available, the bell rang and Dick came in, and behind him a tall figure wrapped in a long black hooded cloak.

"This is my cousin," Dick announced, "and these, Bunnie, are Polly Jameson and Margery Morris."

"See if you can guess which is which," said Polly.

"The dark one is Polly, and the light one is Margery." Dick's cousin spoke in a deep, rather husky contralto. "How do you do? —I've heard a lot about you and your adventures," and she held out her hand to Margery. "I wonder if you can help me get this hood thing off without mussing my hair?"

The cloak dropped to the floor and the visitor stood revealed. Margery and Polly, watching her with eager interest, gasped at her prettiness and the gorgeousness of her attire. The plump, fluffy little blond thing of Polly's imagination was tall, almost too tall for her slender width; the face which crowned the

long body was a pretty one, with its small red mouth, tip-tilted nose, and vivid blue eyes,—eyes that seemed all the bluer because of the masses of straight black hair above them. Her gown of deep coral silk, made with more elaborateness than skill, was in striking contrast to the simple frocks of Polly and Margery.

"I'm afraid—I'm sorry ——" stammered Polly, grown suddenly ill at ease. "It's just a little, informal party."

Bunnie looked at Margery's blue voile, then down at her own costume. "I am dressed up," she admitted with a smile. "To tell the truth, I was simply too tired to dive down into my trunk after something else. It's awfully funny about me, but I hate to unpack."

Polly smiled back at her, relieved. This strange girl was not going to be so alarming, after all.

Dick, fearing that the girls would settle down to a clothes conversation, had already slipped into the living-room and was making friends with Polly's small black kitten stretched out before the fire.

"Oh, Margery!" exclaimed Polly as the girls entered the room.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I had an idea, that's all. Mother," as Mrs. Jameson came in to welcome Bunnie, "I must go down to old Jimmy's."

"Nonsense, Polly."

"Yes,—but Mother!—Margery and I have thought up a stunt for to-night, and I've just remembered something we need for it."

"No, Polly," said Mrs. Jameson, firmly, "you mayn't go down there alone at this time of night."

"I'll go for you, Polly," offered Dick.

"Oh, thank you, Dick. You're a brick. Margery and I will go with you, and we can explain about the stunt on the way,—you'll have to be in it. Do you mind if we go with Dick, Mother?"

"Oh, no, dear—it's all right if you have Dick with you. Will you go with them?" Mrs. Jameson added, turning to Bunnie.

Bunnie smiled and shook her head. "If you don't mind," she said in her deep, husky voice, "I should like to go up-stairs and fix my frock. I'm afraid it's hooked up wrong

in the back. And I'm the kind of a person that hates to be untidy."

"Will Jimmy's be open?" asked Margery, as she and Polly slipped into their coats.

"Jimmy's is always open," declared Dick, opening the front door for them. "I don't believe that he ever sleeps!"

"Snow, snow, be-yew-ti-ful snow!" warbled Polly as she ran down the front steps. "Oh, don't you love the snow? I could roll in it, over and over, and ov——" With a wild shriek and a despairing clutch at the air, she fell prone on the snowy sidewalk.

Shouting with laughter, Dick and Margery hauled their prostrate friend to her feet, and they hurried on their way. Down a narrow side street they stopped before a little many-paned window, filled with a remarkable collection of candy, toys, tobacco, ribbons, and penny valentines of the type known as comic. A low roof hung over it dejectedly, and repeated gradings of the street had raised the sidewalk to within a foot of the window-sill.

"Here we are," and Dick opened the door. A bell jangled furiously, and as they plunged down the two steep steps that led into the

shop, a tall, thin old man with a long white beard appeared to wait upon them.

While Polly invested in three soap-bubble pipes, and a couple of yards of bright green ribbon, which the old man wrapped up with solemn dignity, Margery and Dick amused themselves with inspecting the stock in trade. Margery was particularly interested in a show-case containing pink and yellow bananas and locomotives of a curious rubbery substance, which Dick whispered was called "marsh-mallow," depressed chocolate creams of a sickly hue, and long strips of paper with tiny pink or green candy buttons pasted thereon in rows.

"Do you suppose anybody ever *eats* them?" she asked as they left the shop.

"Yes, indeed," laughed Polly. "The children of Renwyck's Town do—and live to tell the tale. Isn't Jimmy funny? When Esther and I were little we used to think he was Santa Claus, and it worried us because he was so thin. Now we must hurry back!"

Meanwhile, Sam Bennet was wending his way from the opposite direction down the long old-fashioned street to the Jamesons'

house. Certain guinea pigs of his were very much on his mind, and before entering the house he decided to seek out William, the Jamesons' man, and obtain the advice he needed. Accordingly, he turned into the driveway that skirted one side of the house and made his way back to the stable and garage. William was within and delighted to be consulted.

"Yas, Marster Sam," he finished his long and detailed directions, "you do lak ah say. Guess you'll have a mighty fine ebening up at de house," he added. "Dey's goin' ter hab a powahful fine pahty. Miss Polly shuah do know how ter entahtain. Miss Margery Morris, an' anudder Miss Morris, and Marster Dick's alls there. Ah seed um when ah took in some wood foh de fiahplaces."

Sam, who was a gregarious soul, and a staunch believer in parties, started off through the garden toward the house, anticipations high. As he drew near the side porch an inspiration seized him.

"Good," he chuckled. "I'll do it if I can —won't the girls squeal, though! I wonder if Dick's cousin is as pretty as Margery. We

must show her, anyway, that Renwyck's Town isn't such a slow place." He stopped and leaned against a post of the grape arbor in silent, convulsive enjoyment.

Recovered somewhat, he stole up the porch steps and reconnoitered. He tried to peer into the library, the scene of so many happy evenings, for the Jamesons enjoyed nothing so much as gathering Polly's friends about them; but the curtains had been drawn. Through the narrow crack left below the shade Sam could just make out a masculine coat-sleeve that seemed familiar.

"Bully, there's Dick," he whispered, as he cautiously picked his way over the snow-covered porch, stepping high like a cat crossing a wet place. Having grown up with Polly and having run in and out of the house ever since he could remember, he knew that the side door was usually left unfastened. With infinite care he tried the handle, found that it gave, opened the door, and closed it softly behind him. Safely in the dim back hall he paused to listen; from the library came the low hum of voices.

"My, but they sound serious," commented

Sam to himself. "Old Dick isn't much at the society game. But I'll stir them up! I'll show them that I'm not a bump on a log, at any rate."

Rapidly and stealthily he tiptoed down the hall. Before the library door he stopped and, wrapping his long arms about himself, doubled up in another attack of silent, expectant joy. Then, slipping off his overcoat, and draping it over his head, he dropped to all fours and butting open the door, he galloped into the room, barking like a dog.

Silence.

Sam stopped still and waited. Where were the little feminine shrieks, the hearty shouts of boyish laughter?

He barked again, more loudly this time, and pranced around in a circle.

"Well, Samuel," came his father's quiet voice, "are these your company manners?"

Sam's heart stood still. Dragging his coat from his head, he scrambled to his feet to face the smiling vestrymen of St. Peter's.

At the same moment the door into the living-room opened, and Polly, her hat and coat still on, appeared. And worst of all, be-

hind her were Margery and Dick, and Bunnie, who seemed to poor, mortified Sam of an overpowering beauty and splendor.

"What was all that barking?" asked Polly; her eyes traveling from Sam's crimson face to those of the highly amused vestrymen.

"I — well — I," stammered Sam, "I — thought, well, I thought—I'd—well, I'd break the ice!"

"I think that you have, Samuel," agreed his father.

CHAPTER III

THE WEE PARTY

"WHAT'S the joke?" inquired Esther, just come in, of the hilarious group about the fire.

"Ask Sam," laughed Dick.

Sam grinned sheepishly. "It's too tragic a tale, Esther," he declared, "for one so young and fair as yourself to be saddened by. Oh, hello," with evident relief, "there's Harry Richards! What are you doing in Renwyck's Town, Harry?"

"Rusticating," tranquilly answered the tall, dark boy who had just entered.

Margery looked up at him with interest. As Harry was being educated away from Renwyck's Town at a fashionable boarding-school, and seldom spent any time at home, she had not met him before. Polly in speaking of him had dubbed him "silly," but Margery hastily decided that he was very good-looking, and that he had far more of an "air".

than had the other Renwyck's Town boys. Perceiving her interest he crossed the room and sat down beside her.

"So you are Miss Morris," he began. "Mother wrote me about your adventures."

Margery flushed. "I—I——" she stammered.

There was a mild commotion in the front hall and pretty, fly-away Sally Watson came in with her brother Teddy and Billy Hedges.

"Oh, hello, Harry," Sally hailed him, "how is it that you are honoring Renwyck's Town with your presence?"

Harry laughed. "Oh, I had a difference of opinion with the Prof. at school," he answered easily. "Who's that girl over there?" he added to Margery, his glance falling on Bunnie talking vivaciously to Sam. "I never saw her before."

"That's Elizabeth Morris, Dick's cousin—they call her Bunnie. She just came here yesterday."

Dick, who had been having an argument with Polly over the merits of a battered bulldog belonging to a neighbor, joined them at that moment and Harry left to sit by Bunnie.

"Harry and your cousin seem to have become great friends," remarked Margery to Dick a few minutes later.

"Harry is a great success wid de ladies," returned Dick somewhat drily.

"Hoorah!" exulted Polly in a sibilant stage whisper, "the vestrymen are going now. We can begin our stunt. Sam, we shall need you,—and you, too, Mother."

Mrs. Jameson laughed and put down her knitting. "You had better explain, Polly, what this is to be."

"All right—I'll make the announcement. Ahem! Ladies and gentlemen," Polly proclaimed, assuming the high sing-song voice of the local auctioneer, "the cele-brated Empire Stock Com-pany will now give their famous per-formance of the Tamin' of the Shrew in Five Minutes, adapted from the dramer of Mr. Willyum Shakespeare. Come on, Margery and Dick."

The celebrated Empire Stock Company withdrew into the library, and the doors were closed.

"What is keeping them? What do you suppose they are up to?" questioned Esther,

as shrieks of laughter, much running to and fro, and plaintive groans from Sam and Dick were heard.

"Let's hurry them up," suggested Billy Hedges, applauding violently and pointedly.

"Anon! Anon!" came Polly's voice from the other side of the closed doors.

They were opened at last, and the impatient audience was rewarded with the opening scene of a much abridged version of the Taming of the Shrew. To give the drama even a more classic touch than the original the actors all spoke in the best of brogues; and Dick and Sam were the leading ladies, while Polly, Mrs. Jameson and Margery played the men's parts. Dick, as Kate the Shrew, was lovely beyond words in an ancient purple silk of Mrs. Jameson's. Mrs. Jameson, although plump, was short; Dick was tall and muscular. The dress had refused to meet across his broad chest, and had only been fastened around the waist by main force. The skirt came half-way up to his knees in front while the train dangled forlornly in the back between his heels. A blue and white checked sweeping cap gave a final touch of coquetry to the costume. Mar-

gery, as Petruchio, had her identity disguised by a bright green ribbon necktie and a collar of Mr. Jameson's many sizes too large for her.

Just as Kate, repudiating Petruchio's offer of marriage with all the ardor of a modern bachelor maid, had nearly capsized through inadvertently stepping backwards on his train, the door-bell rang and some one entered.

"Oh, there's Miss Patty Kirkby!" cried Polly delightedly, forgetting that she was acting Kate's father. "I'm so glad you've come! Oh, dear! Look what I've done!"

In her elation she had dropped the soap-bubble pipe she was pretending to smoke, and had broken it.

Miss Patty smiled. "Don't let me interrupt you—I merely ran in to ask Mrs. Jameson to help me with this knitting. Dick, you are too pretty for words in that frock!"

She sat down on the sofa beside Bunnie and Harry, and the play went on to a triumphant conclusion; a finale that was achieved without Dick's upsetting himself with his train, although he had numerous narrow escapes.

"Well, Dick," chuckled Mr. Jameson as the actors joined the audience after the performance, "I had no idea you were such an actress."

"I thought I should break my neck with this train," grinned Dick, fanning himself with the sweeping cap.

"What shall we do now?" asked Polly. "Charades?"

"I'll play for you, Polly," Miss Patty suggested, "if you would like to dance."

The boys rushed to roll back rugs and push chairs and tables out of the way, and Miss Patty sat down at the piano.

Miss Patty Kirkby, the rector's niece, lived with her mother in a shabby little frame house near the Jamesons', and eked out a very slender income by giving music lessons. Before her aged grandmother had fallen and broken her hip, and Miss Patty had come back to Renwyck's Town to take care of her, there had been stories of her musical triumphs and of the brilliant, happy life she led. Tales which Renwyck's Town with Miss Patty before its eyes, patient, hard-working, uncomplaining, had already forgotten. Indeed, cer-

tain ladies, contemporaries of hers, regarded it as rather an impertinence for any one whose life was so barren of all that made their lives worth while to them, to persist in remaining so pretty.

Her young girl pupils, however, loved her, and awkward fingers chased each other up the piano in scales, or performed acrobatic feats in detested technical exercises, all the more agilely because of the inspiration of Miss Patty's charm.

To-night, in the soft glow of the piano lamp, she seemed so young, in spite of her graying hair, that Margery looked at her with a little pang of pity for her dull, self-sacrificing life, and resolved to practice her next lesson better than ever.

"A penny for your thoughts," said Harry Richards, as the dancing commenced and he claimed Margery for the first dance.

"Would you really like to know what I was thinking about? Well—it's too dire and dreadful a secret to tell you."

Harry danced well, much better than the other Renwyck's Town boys, and Margery decided as he deftly guided her out into the

long dim hall that he was decidedly an improvement over the others. Dick she was fond of, but then, he was just Dick.

"Renwyck's Town is a queer old hole, isn't it? A girl like you must find it mighty dull here."

Sentiments with which Margery would have heartily agreed a couple of months before, but which now she loyally denied. "No, indeed," she declared. "I love Renwyck's Town."

Harry Richards raised his eyebrows. "Of course," he said, "your grandfather has a fine old place. It's the people here that make me tired. Everybody is related to everybody else, too—worse luck! Why, even Polly and I are third cousins—her father and my mother are second cousins."

"Oh, but I love the people, too,—the boys and girls."

Harry deftly avoided a collision with Billy Hedges flying down the hall, apparently all knees and elbows. "And they love you too," he said pointedly, looking down with evident admiration at her blond curls and delicate, high-bred little face.

Margery laughed. Polly had told her, she remembered, that Harry was "silly." Dick and Sam, and their funny natural ways seemed nicer, after all.

The music stopped with a loud chord, and Dick came to ask Margery for the next dance.

She was glad of the opportunity for a talk that a dance with Dick afforded. More than she admitted to herself she was interested in this new girl who had come in to take what was once, briefly, her place.

"How do you like your new cousin, now?" she asked as Dick put his arm around her waist and they glided off into a waltz.

"She's pretty; and she's good fun, I imagine. Look at Billy dancing! A grasshopper having hysterics couldn't be more spry! Almost—but not quite, my son!" as Sam narrowly missed colliding with them.

"And how does Deborah like her?" went on Margery with a sudden little pang that she hoped was not jealousy.

"I don't know—ask Deborah. She'll be here pretty soon, I think. She went to a missionary meeting to-night, and she's to stop for us to take her home. There's Teddy

Watson signaling for the rest of this dance—come along, we'll sneak out into the hall and give him the slip."

Miss Patty stopped to rest at last, and the dancers collapsed into the nearest chairs. Outside in the quiet street there was the steady crunch, crunch of the snow on the pavement in front of the house and the sound of voices.

"There's Deborah now," said Dick. "I hear her speaking. Who's that with her, I wonder? Oh," as the front door opened, "it's Dr. Huston. Come along, Margery—Miss Patty's beginning again. Let's dance this now, and you can talk to Deborah afterward."

They swung off into a one-step, and Margery could only wave her hand over Dick's shoulder to the quaint little figure standing by the doorway eagerly watching the dancing. Deborah Davis, the housekeeper at the Morris farm, was an especial favorite with all the young people, and Margery, far away from her mother, had come to depend on her sympathetic understanding and gentle guidance.

It was not until the dancing was over and the boys were passing around the hot choco-

late and sandwiches that Margery had a chance to talk to her.

"Oh, Deborah," she began, sinking down on the sofa beside her, "I have been meaning to come to see you to thank you for that delicious jelly you sent us. Grandpapa liked it ever so much. How—how does it seem to have another girl at the farm?" she added somewhat hesitatingly with a glance at Bunnie on the other side of the room, talking gayly and a little loudly to Harry and Billy Hedges.

Deborah patted her on the knee. "Well," she said with a smile, "Bunnie is a pretty girl, and a lively one—I wish she wouldn't say 'now I'm the kind of a person' so much —it sounds conceited. I think, though, that it will do her good to know some young girls like you and Esther and Polly."

"What's that about Polly?" demanded that young lady, coming up with a plate of sandwiches in her hand.

"Never mind—run away," laughed Margery, and Polly left them to go and talk to Dr. Huston.

"Bunnie's grandfather has taken a great

fancy to her," went on Deborah. "I wish he were as fond of Dick—I feel sorry for Dick sometimes. The boy's heart is set on being an architect like his father; and his grandfather wants to make a farmer out of him. I wish Mr. Morris would let him have a college course, at any rate, before he has to settle down here. But he says, 'no.' However, I tell Dick not to despair yet. The fact is, if you are doing right it's pretty nearly always too early to begin to despair. That's one thing I always liked, when I had to study history in school, about that John Paul Jones. He didn't give way to despair. I didn't get much schooling, but I had one teacher who was fine. When we studied our history he could make us see that battle between the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Serapis* as plain as day. Why, I could see those ships right before me—there they were close together, and the sailors fighting hand to hand, and savagely! And the captain of the big, fine new enemy ship calling to John Paul Jones on his poor, little old ship, 'Have you struck your colors yet?' And Captain Jones shouting back, 'I haven't begun to fight!' Many's

the time when everything has seemed to be dead wrong, and I didn't see any hope anywheres, that I've said to myself, 'I haven't begun to fight!' And then I've gone ahead and won my battle just as John Paul Jones did his. How's your grandfather?" she finished unexpectedly.

Before Margery could answer Dr. Huston sat down on the sofa beside her. "Well, Xantippe?" he remarked in his brusque way.

The doctor's contention that Margery resembled Socrates' shrewish wife was a standing joke between them.

"I haven't smashed the furniture or thrown the tongs at anybody since yesterday morning," answered Margery virtuously; and the doctor pulled the curl nearest to him by way of retort.

"Esther, your father has come for you," announced Mr. Jameson. "He's waiting in the sleigh outside."

"Ten o'clock," said Deborah. "I think that some of the rest of us had better go, too. We have a cold drive ahead of us, this wintry night."

"Oh, I wish everybody wouldn't go,"

wailed Polly, as Sally declared that she, too, must leave, and there was a general move toward sorting out and putting on the collection of overcoats and cloaks, muffs, scarfs, mittens and galoshes deposited in the front hall.

"Where did you leave the sleigh, Dick?" asked the doctor, as the party from the Morris farm, which, in spite of Deborah, was among the last to leave, trooped out of the front door.

"At Mike's stable."

"I thought so. Well, I'll walk down the street with you and leave Miss Patty at her house on the way."

Margery and Polly, who had followed them to the doorway, stood watching the little procession as it went down the snowy street; Bunnie in front with Harry and Dick, and the doctor back of them with Deborah and Miss Patty on either arm. The moon shone through the bare branches of the trees and lighted the quaint old red-brick houses and the solitary sleigh jingling past. Margery slipped her arm through Polly's and hopped up and down on the door-step to keep warm.

"'Twas from Aunt Dinah's quilting party I was seeing Nellie home," she hummed. Then to Polly, "Oh, isn't the moonlight on the snow beautiful!"

Polly drew her in and closed the door. "Brr," she said with a shiver, "it's cold. I wish," she added with an unusual sentimentality induced by the moon, "that some one would 'see' Miss Patty home for keeps, and marry her and give her a coach and four like Cinderella."

"I imagine that just her freedom, and the power to go on with her music would be happiness enough for Miss Patty," observed Mrs. Jameson. "She is so wonderfully patient with that exacting, faultfinding old grandmother of hers. And always so cheerful! I wonder sometimes that she doesn't give way to despair. Come closer to the fire, girls, I'm afraid you took cold standing there in the doorway."

"Perhaps," said Margery absently, her mind on Deborah and John Paul Jones, "Miss Patty hasn't begun to fight."

"*What?*" said Polly.

CHAPTER IV

CALLS

"MARGERY," Polly's voice came over the telephone the next day, "don't you want to go out with me to Esther's this afternoon?"

Margery hesitated. It was snowing again, cold and blustery. Indoors there were blazing wood-fires, and one of her Christmas books still unread. Kiley, the cross old cook, had promised to allow her to make candy on the kitchen range. To-day, Kiley happened to be in a good humor; it might be weeks before she had another such spell of sunny temper.

"I—well ——" Margery began. "It's snowing."

"I know it is, Chick-a-biddy. But it's such fun to be out in a snow like this! And I'm going to take the sleigh—we have a little one that just holds two. Poor Esther

has her hands full with the youngsters! Mrs. Crowell is spending the week-end in the city, and Esther has to run the house,—and the family. All the children have colds, and poor Es has to stay in with them and keep them amused. I telephoned to her, and she says she's nearly distracted. *Do* let's go and help her!"

"Well—perhaps."

"Oh, yes, do. You can wrap up well, and you won't mind the cold at all. Really you won't."

"All right—I'll go," Margery agreed. "How soon will you be here?"

"Right-away-quick."

Miss Tucker urged warm wraps, and Mr. Morris, an invalid himself and always apprehensive about the health of every one else, would not be satisfied until Margery had consented to put on, over the sweater and ulster she already wore, his motor-coat of rough shaggy fur. Mr. Morris was a large man, and Margery was only a slip of a girl; the great coat flapped about her heels when she walked, and the sleeves hung below her finger tips.

"Oh, Miss Tucker," she protested in a

whisper, giving her dark fur toque a vindictive jerk down over her eyebrows, "I can't go out looking like this! I'm a freak! Besides, I'm cooked in all these things."

Miss Tucker was obdurate. "Better be a freak than to take cold. But you will get overheated if you stay in here. Go outside and walk up and down the veranda until Polly comes; and be thankful we're not making you wear your grandfather's galoshes. In fact, now that it's mentioned, I think that you had better put them on, too."

With a grimace of horror, Margery half skipped, half waddled to the front door.

It was such a singularly fat Margery that Polly found waiting for her when she drove up to the front door, that she burst into shrieks of laughter. Margery herself, suddenly perceiving the humor of the situation, laughed so much that she could scarcely get into the sleigh; and when Spy, the sedate old horse, turned his head and solemnly regarded her, both girls became almost hysterical.

"We'll stop at Mrs. Finklestein's as we go through town," said Polly as they turned into the highroad, "and get some lady-fingers for

the children—I suppose they are as harmless as anything—and then we will stop at the Morris farm and show you off."

"Not much," Margery declared. "If Dick caught sight of me looking like this, I'd never hear the end of it! But I'd like to see Deborah—and I suppose we ought to call on Bunnie."

"Yes, we ought. You can slip off your lion-at-the-zoo coat before we go into the house and leave it in the sleigh."

Margery's descent at the baker's was the occasion of more laughter, and the startled "Awk" of the worthy Mrs. Finklestein when she appeared within the shop and demanded "lady-fingers," sent her off into uncontrollable giggles.

"I bought a pound, as directed," she told Polly as she climbed into the sleigh again, "and some macaroons with little lambs made of icing on the top. They look like tombstones, but I suppose the children will like them."

With a sigh of contentment Margery settled back in the little sleigh and drew the fur rug closer around her. It was great fun jingling

along the white roads through the snowflakes that danced and whirled about them, pelting in their faces and eddying into fence corners, where it piled and drifted.

"Oh, Polly, isn't it pretty? Just like a Christmas card!" she cried, as they turned in at the gate of the Morris farm, where Dick Ball and his little brother Benjamin lived with their grandfather and the old housekeeper, Deborah Davis. The pine-trees that bordered the long avenue leading to the handsome old red-brick mansion were festooned with snow wreaths, and the wide lawn was an unbroken sheet of white. At the sound of the sleigh-bells a rabbit leaped from under the shelter of a low-hanging bough and scampered across the snow.

"We'll drive right around to the stable," said Polly, "so that Spy needn't stand out in the cold."

The wide doors of the stable porch were closed; Margery jumped out to open them and was standing watching Polly drive in when Dick suddenly appeared.

"Hello, polar bear," he grinned. "Going to a zoo-party, Marge? I'm mighty glad you

girls have come," he went on before Margery could get in an obvious retort. "I'm mighty glad you've come," he repeated with such evident relief that Margery asked quickly:

"What's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing."

Margery was used to his taciturn ways, so she insisted, "Oh, yes, there is something."

"Oh, no—nothing. It's just that Bunnie is sitting round all bored to death—makes everybody feel rather blue."

"Why, I thought Bunnie liked it here."

"She did at first. She was downright enthusiastic. There never was such a place as Renwyck's Town—or such people as Renwyck Towners. But you see there isn't anything doing this afternoon, and it's dull and snowy, and she feels different. She says she's the kind of a person that likes something going on. Some of the fellows were out this morning, but that only lasted until noon."

"All right," said Polly, helping Margery to slip off the fur coat, "we'll try to restore Renwyck Town's lost prestige. Take the other sleeve, Dick, and tug."

Benjamin ran out to meet them. "Mar-

gie! Margie!" he cried, excitedly. "Reggie Smedly ate some poison!"

"Gracious!" Margery exclaimed, with all the horror Benjamin could desire.

"But Reggie didn't die," he went on importantly, "'cause the doctor gave him an anecdote."

"An anecdote?" Margery looked to Dick for enlightenment.

Dick shouted with laughter. "He means an *antidote!* Don't try to use big words, Bud; they're apt to trip you."

"Don't you mean, Benjie, that the doctor gave him an artichoke?" Polly teased. "Dick doesn't know everything."

"No, I mean anecdote," Benjamin maintained. "Reggie said so."

"If Reggie the Oracle said it," laughed Dick, "it must be so."

Deborah was plainly very glad to see the girls and ushered them into the dining-room where she and Bunnie were sitting before a blazing wood-fire. "We're sitting here because it's the warmest room in the house. I'm so glad you've come," she added in a whisper to Margery, giving her hand a

gentle squeeze. "Bunnie was getting rather dull."

Deborah was evidently rather weighed down by the responsibility of providing a restless and pretty young girl with amusement.

Bunnie greeted them with an eager cordiality and vivacity that made Margery doubt if she was quite so desolate as she had been represented, but Polly shrewdly suspected that a far different expression had been turned to her family from the one which welcomed them.

"I'm so sorry you didn't come earlier," Bunnie exclaimed. "I had a caller this morning—I'm the kind of a person that likes to have my friends around—a Mr. Carson."

"Mr. Carson?" exclaimed Polly. "Why, he died last month! Oh, you mean Johnny —Johnny Carson?"

"Yes. He stayed all the morning. I simply couldn't drive him home." Bunnie's tone was complacent. Evidently she was one of a large class of young girls who believe not only in not hiding their social light under a

bushel, but in setting it up on the tallest flagpole they can command, and continually dwelling on their triumphs and their charms.

Polly unfortunately did not realize that she was to be impressed. "You poor thing," she said sympathetically. "Johnny's an awful pest. He will bore any girl to death that will allow him to."

Polly's answer plainly did not please. Margery, sitting beside Benjamin on the sofa, wondered if it could be that Bunnie was not going to like Polly. Not to like Polly seemed to her as unnatural as for the brooks to run up-hill, or the sun to set in the east.

Polly, all unconscious, chattered away happily, laughing with Dick and Deborah over Sam's entrance the night before, and Dick's trials with his long skirts. She was cordial in her invitation to Bunnie to squeeze into the little sleigh and accompany them to Esther Crowell's. But Bunnie declined rather coolly and turned to Margery.

"Dick told me that you were the nicest girl in Renwyck's Town," she said, ignoring Polly. "You know it's funny about me—but I believe in telling people what other people

say about them. And Dick said you are the prettiest, too."

Dick looked embarrassed. "Oh, cut it out, Bunnie," he murmured.

Margery smiled a polite acknowledgment of the compliments, although her heart was hot within her. "She just did that to hurt Polly's feelings," she thought indignantly. "I think that's a horrid way to act."

"Margie—tell me about the bear," Benjamin's voice broke in on her thoughts.

"All right, honey." Composing her face to a preternatural solemness, she recited in the sepulchral tone Benjamin found so enchanting:

"'Benjie met a bear.
The bear was bulge-y.
The bulge was Ben-jie.'

Yes, Polly," she added in her natural voice, "I'm ready to go if you are."

"Hurry, old dear," Polly remarked to Spy as Dick helped her and Margery into the sleigh and unhitched for them. "We must be at Esther's soon, or she will think we aren't coming.

"It's funny about me," she went on in im-

itation of Bunnie, "but I'm the kind of a person who likes to get there."

Margery laughed. "I'm glad Dick's gone into the stable and can't hear you. Hurry, Spy!"

Under the influence of the cold Spy became quite animated with a sedate, elderly kittenishness he seldom allowed himself, and covered the distance between the Morris and the Crowell farms in a surprisingly short time.

"What is that?" cried Polly, as they drew near to the front door, and a small, dark object suddenly shot from the side of the house and whirled across the yard.

Margery brushed away the snowflakes that would collect on her long thick eyelashes. "It's some one coasting."

"I can't see a sled," demurred Polly, leaning forward the better to see.

"It's little Helen Crowell. What has the child got to coast on? Oh, I see—it's a pie-pan!"

The girls laughed and beckoned to Helen, but her pie-plate and the ice were too attractive.

Esther was waiting for them at the door.

"I heard the sleigh-bells," she beamed. "Oh, I'm so glad to see you. I was so lonely and blue. The poor children have to be kept in the house too, and that makes it so hard. They all have colds and are fretful."

"We saw Helen coasting on a pie-pan."

"Yes, isn't that the funniest idea? She thinks it's lots more exciting than a sled. The rain-gutter overflowed and then froze, so that there's a perfectly solid sheet of ice from the sitting-room windows straight out over the yard. I suppose I oughtn't to let Helen be out there; but the children play pretty well until she gets with them—and then there's Bedlam!"

Esther looked at Margery's portly figure and laughed. "You certainly are a picture of grace, Marge—there's something so dignified about the way it flaps about your heels. But," she went on, her dark eyes glowing with affection, for Polly and Margery were perfect in Esther's opinion, "you look so sweet in that little fur cap that it makes up for the coat. Come on up-stairs," as Margery slipped off the offending garment, and throwing it on a chair tossed her cap down on top

of it, "and I'll show you the hat Mother and I made. Or, rather,—for that's a case of Betsy and I killed the bear—that Mother made. I only designed it. We had lots of fun concocting it out of all the odds and ends. But really, I think that it turned out pretty well—and I certainly did need a new hat."

She led the way up the stairs to the quaint little room she shared with a younger sister. "Sit down while I get it. I keep it in Mother's room, for there isn't room for even an extra bandbox in here."

Esther disappeared and the other girls sat down expectantly. They had come to enjoy Esther's makeshifts and to find almost as much pride and pleasure in them as did Esther herself. Margery thought she knew no prettier room than the one Esther had evolved, with its plaited rugs of buff and blue, the work of many a long winter evening, its walls of soft buff which she had tinted herself, with the aid of one of her brothers, and the quaint chintz curtains and valances she had fashioned out of a remnant bought at a mid-winter's sale.

"Here it is," announced Esther, lugging in

a huge old-fashioned bandbox covered with scenic wall-paper.

There was a creaking in the hall, and a rumble, and a little boy seated on a toy elephant, which he laboriously propelled by dint of digging his heels into the carpet, passed the door.

"Jimmie," called Esther, "come here and see Polly and Margie, honey." Three-year-old Jimmie was her especial charge and pet.

"Me doesn't wike 'em," answered Jimmie calmly, continuiug his tortuous progress.

Esther was horrified. "Oh, Jimmie dear —you mustn't say things like that!"

Polly intervened. "Now, Esther, you know perfectly well that if you were having a lovely ride on a little toy elephant, you wouldn't 'wike' a lot of tiresome girls either. We brought some cakes with us," she added in a louder voice. "Nice little cakes for nice little boys who like us."

There was a pause in the trundling of the elephant; a silence evidently given over to reflection; a murmured "Me does wike 'em," and the patter of little feet.

Concealing their amusement as best they

could the three girls affected to be entirely unconscious of the small figure that appeared at the door and sidled up to Margery, seated on the bed.

"Do show us that hat," urged Polly, with a smile at Esther. With a little grimace in return, Esther untied the bandbox and drew out a blue and white toque.

"It's really a little too delicate for anything but best," she explained as she put it on before the mirror and wheeled around for inspection. "But it looks very well with my blue suit, and Mother lends me her ermine tippet to go with it."

The little white ermine toque with its blue velvet crown and saucy white quills was very becoming set above Esther's dark eyes and glowing cheeks. "See," she said proudly, taking it off and passing it round for inspection, "this ermine was on an old cloak in the garret that belonged to Grandmother Simpson, and this blue velvet was on a bonnet Aunt Molly had when she was a girl—we steamed it and I really think that it looks like new. And the feathers? Well, don't ever breathe it to a soul!—I borrowed them from the white

turkey. Such a time as I had chasing him! I wish, though," thoughtfully rubbing the fur, "that this ermine wasn't quite so yellow —I'm afraid that people will think it's dirty. No, Jimmiekins—you can't put on sister's hat. Well—just a minute. I'll hold it—don't put your hands on it! Oh, Jimmie dear, those dirty little paws right on the fur!"

Margery knew nothing about the great law of compensation, but she realized rather wistfully as she watched Esther glowing over her home-made little hat that if the other girl had never known the pleasure of having pretty, expensive things for the asking, she herself had never known the fun and satisfaction of making something out of nothing.

"Why so pensive, Margery Daw?" asked Polly. "Is it that the sight of Esther's wondrous fair bonnet has bewitched you? 'Speak, speak, thou fearful guest!' My goodness, Margery! How many cakes have you given that child?"

"I—I don't know," stammered Margery, worried. "Three or four—I really wasn't noticing."

"Never mind," consoled Esther. "I don't believe that many will hurt him—but he had better not have any more." She put the hat down carefully in the center of her queer little old-fashioned mahogany bed. "Now we ought to go back and look after the children in the nursery."

Arm in arm the three girls strolled back to the big nursery at the end of the house where Molly Crowell, a seven year replica of Esther, and her nine-year-old brother Tom, were rather streakily painting orange and green the clothes of some superlatively beautiful and athletic magazine ladies and gentlemen, and not quarreling in the process any more than was necessary.

"Peace almost seems to reign," whispered Esther. "It takes Helen to stir things up and cause a rumpus."

Margery sank down in the queer old chair, very low, and long in the rockers, that made her feel as though she were rocking on the back of her neck, and looked about the big room with its shabby furniture and battered paint. For all its shabbiness the room was warm and homelike. Every year relatives in

England sent the Crowells the holiday numbers of the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic*, and the gay colored supplements of these, pictures mainly of happy children and their pets, had been tacked up in a frieze around the walls; shelves held the children's books and collections of birds' eggs; with the coals glowing in the open Franklin stove, and the snow pelting a reminder against the windows of how wintry it was out-of-doors, Margery felt it to be very cozy indeed.

"Yes, it is a dear old room," Esther said in answer to a remark on the subject. "A good many children, first and last, have been happy in it. It was the nursery away back in great-grandfather's time. Jimmie ought to be in here now, I'm thinking, instead of playing in those draughty halls. Jimmie," she called, going to the door, "Jimmie dear!"

There was no answer and Esther turned to Margery. "The little rascal is hiding. Come on, Margie, and help me find him—and then we'll go down to the pantry and see if there is anything to eat there. Come on, Polly."

"And bring us some bread and butter

and sugar," suggested Molly. "And, sister, spread it as though you were spreading it for yourself."

"A nice reputation she's giving you, Esther," laughed Polly. "Molly and Tom, you dreadful children, you have eaten all those cakes we brought you, already!" Molly and Tom nodded cheerfully; what were cakes for, but to be eaten? "You rascals! Well, as punishment, I'm going to stay up here and help you paint this magazine lady purple and green. Go on, Esther, and get your bread and butter."

"Well," said Esther, after a search had failed to disclose the missing Jimmie, "he isn't here—perhaps he's down-stairs with Martha."

Laughing and chatting the two girls passed down the hall. "Don't you come in here, please, sister," came a small voice behind a partially closed door. "I'm making a s'prise for you, sister—a lubby s'prise! I'm washing your new hat."

With a shriek, Esther threw open the door, and disclosed Jimmie seated on the bathroom floor, the precious new hat balanced on his fat

knees, and a dripping nail-brush in his hand. Beside him stood a tumbler of soapy water and a box of tooth powder.

With another shriek, Esther clutched at the hat. Holding it aloft, she anxiously inspected it, turning it this way and that.

"Oh, Jimmie," she cried. "You naughty little boy! Sister's lovely new hat!"

Jimmie frowned. "You didn't ought to come in, sister," he protested. "I was doin' it for a s'prise! You said the fur was all dirty, sister, an' I was washing it for you."

"It certainly would have been a 's'prise,'" Esther admitted, not knowing whether to laugh or to scold. With one hand she gave the rescued head-gear to Margery; with the other she yanked the well-meaning Jimmie to his feet.

"I was going to soap your hat first," Jimmie explained with an air of conscious virtue, "an'—an' then I was going to pour lots an' lots of water over it—the way you wash my hair—an' then it would have been all beautiful, sister. An' you comed and spoiled the s'prise," he finished indignantly.

"Here, Margery, hold him while I put this

poor hat away in Mother's cupboard before anything else happens to it."

Margery seized the culprit's hand; Jimmie, deprived of his liberty, burst into howls of grief and resentment, and capered and pranced in an effort to break loose.

"Jimmie! Jimmie!" implored his distracted sister. "Do keep quiet, child. In a minute we'll go down-stairs and get you some bread and butter and sugar."

Jimmie stopped roaring, although plainly still suspicious of the two spoil-sports.

"Esther, what's that noise?" asked Margery as they reached the top of the stairs.

They stopped and listened. From the hall below came a muffled sound of strangling. For a moment Esther stared at Margery, eyes dilated with horror; then she ran swiftly down into the dim hall below. Deserting Jimmie, Margery ran after her, the blood surging into her heart. At the foot of the stairs a huddled form lay choking and gasping.

"Helen, the croup!" gasped Esther, gathering the little sister into her arms. "Get Martha—she'll know what to do."

With feet that fairly flew, although they

seemed to her like lead, Margery rushed into the kitchen where old Martha, the Crowells' cook, housemaid, laundress, and general adviser and critic, was ironing a centerpiece.

"Martha," she gasped, "Helen's dying with the croup."

Martha carefully tested her iron and put it down. "No more than I expected, with Esther lettin' her out in this snow-storm," she grumbled, "with nothin' between her an' the cold ground but one of me pie-pans. Here—you get that little alcohol stove in the pantry, and take up this here kettle of hot water, too. An' wait a minute till I get some mustard—I'm comin' with you. Get me a teacup an' a spoon. Come on."

In spite of her grumbling, Martha had rapidly collected the things needed, and followed by Margery with the steaming teakettle, she hurried through the house as fast as her rheumatism would let her to Mrs. Crowell's room, where Esther had already carried the sufferer.

"Now, Esther, don't take on," commanded Martha. "Helen's had these attacks before. Help Margery to light that stove. Put the

kettle on it. Pour me out a cup of water. Make Helen swallow this. Bring the bottle that's on the lower right hand corner of your mother's medicine closet—the second from the front. Turn the hot water on in the bath tub. Send Jimmie into the nursery—he'll be sick next. Hurry and finish undressing Helen."

Margery and Esther flew to obey her experienced directions, and before long the dreadful paroxysms were lessened, the agonized battle for breath grew easier.

Leaning over the bed and gently crooning, "Rock-a-bye baby," Martha motioned toward the door. "You two girls go back to the nursery," she whispered, "an' look after the other children. I'm going to wrap Helen up well in the quilt, an' then try to rock her to sleep. Draw the big rocker nearer, Esther, please."

Silently the two girls tiptoed out of the room, and went back to the nursery, where they interrupted a glorious game of Indians.

"Where have you been?" asked Polly, with remarkable composure considering the fact that she was in the very act of being

scalped by an Indian brave. "We've painted a dozen beautiful ladies and gentlemen, and acted Uncle Tom's Cabin. Jimmie says you spoiled his lovely 's'prise.'"

Esther and Margery looked at each other. Jimmie and the hat seemed, after their recent fright about Helen, like something that might have happened long ago in some other state of existence. Then hysterical with anxiety and relief, they burst into shrieks of laughter.

Esther accompanied Polly and Margery to the door when they left. "I'm so sorry, Margery," she apologized, "that all this should have happened while you were here—I'm afraid you won't want to come again."

Martha came down the hall behind them. "Now, Esther," she remonstrated, "don't you take on. It's good knowledge for Margery to have—some day she may be glad she's seen a case of croup. You can't have any waffles for supper—I'm too tired with this here mix-up."

CHAPTER V

IN THE CITY

"Oh, dear, I wish Miss Tucker were back," sighed Margery dismally, tossing her school books on the bed and collapsing on top of them, her hat and coat still on. "I'd get her to give me something for this old cold. I'm so tired. I'm sick of school—I hate it!"

She rolled over on her back, to the considerable damage of her hat, and lay staring at the ceiling, her arms outstretched and her feet trailing forlornly over the edge of the bed. "I wonder if I can ever get up," she murmured. "I wish Miss Tucker were back!"

Miss Tucker had left to nurse a former patient who had had a bad accident. Margery missed her, in spite of the fact that Miss Tucker had most stern and rigid ideas on the subject of young people going to bed early, and was inflexible on the point of candy.

The luncheon bell rang softly down-stairs;

Margery remained sprawled out on the bed disregarding it. "Miss Margery," said the maid who appeared at the door, "luncheon's ready, and your grandfather's waitin'."

Margery sat up. "Oh, Sarah—I'm so tired. I can't go down."

"It's just hungry ye are. Folks get faint wid hunger. Wait until ye've had a good plate of hot soup, thin it's different intirely ye'll be feelin'. An' I wasn't ter tell ye—but Kiley's made a little ice-cream for a surprise. Oh, Miss Margery—yer pretty hat!"

Sarah kindly straightened out the hat and hung away the rumpled coat, while Margery dragged herself down to luncheon.

After a cup of hot chicken broth, Margery did indeed feel better, and was able to answer with some degree of animation her grandfather's questions about school.

"I wonder," her grandfather smiled, as she finished a plaintive tale of her struggles with her Latin, "if Cæsar had known what misery he was to bring on countless generations of school children whether he would have had the heart to go on with that campaign."

Although luncheon had revived her some-

what, Margery was not sorry that a heavy rain set in; she had promised to spend the afternoon with Polly, but she felt too listless for even her congenial society.

"I'll telephone her that it's raining too hard for me to go," she decided.

Polly's answer to her excuses sounded unnecessarily cheerful, she thought. Margery, her knees feeling as though they were made of paper like a Japanese doll's, and her head as heavy as a cannon-ball, at once felt injured. "No," she answered firmly, "I can't come in the car—I don't like to take it out in the rain."

Polly, at the other end of the wire, giggled. "Are you afraid that its complexion will wash off like Miss Marcia Bernstein's?"

Margery hung up the receiver without deigning a retort.

In the library she searched for a book, and stumbled on a worn volume with "The Wide, Wide World" printed on its back in faded gilt letters. Inside in faint brown ink a name was written. "Oh," she exclaimed, "this must have been Grandmamma's when she was a girl."

She turned to ask her grandfather if she might take it; he was asleep by the fire with his handkerchief spread over his face, so, tucking the book under her arm, she retreated to her room, where she curled up on the window-seat to read. The rain beat drearily against the glass; the wind howled fitfully in the chimney. Her book, with its fine sprinkling of funerals, and its perseveringly dismal heroine, was even more cheerless than the weather; as the rain beat harder and the wind wailed louder, and her headache grew worse, Margery's self-control was all that saved her from rivaling the lugubrious Ellen and bursting into tears at every page.

"Here's Walter come with the mail, an' a letter fer you, Miss Margery. Maybe it will make yez feel more chipper-like." The kind-hearted Sarah looked thoughtfully at Margery huddled up on the window-seat. "Maybe it's yer mother ye're wantin'. But never fear, the first of June will be here before yez know it —an' yer mother with it. Would ye like me ter build a fire on the grate here? An' I have an idea Kiley has some cake in the cake-box —shall I find out fer yez?"

"Oh, would you, Sarah?" Margery held out her hand for the letter. "Oh, goody," she exclaimed, as she recognized the writing to be that of a much-loved friend of her mother's, "it's from Aunt Kate!"

With eager fingers she tore open the envelope. "Dearest Margie," she read, "this is not a letter—just a hasty scrabble to tell you that Katherine and I have come East somewhat unexpectedly, and are now in Philadelphia, visiting a dear old auntie of mine. From here we expect to go to Washington for a month, and then on down to Florida. Now then, I want you to come up to the city on Saturday, take luncheon with me here at my aunt's—then we will go to the matinee and have a regular spree together! I had a letter from your dear mother yesterday—needless to say her mind and heart are very much on her far-away little daughter ——"

Her aches and pains forgotten, Margery flew down the stairs to the library. "Grandpapa—mayn't I go? *Please* say yes!"

"Go where, child?"

"With Aunt Kate."

Seeing the letter in her hand, Mr. Morris

took it, put on his glasses and with exasperating slowness read it to the end. "Yes," he said, folding it up, "you may go—it will be a pleasant experience for you. You will have to take Sarah, as, of course, I am not equal to the trip. There's a time-table in the desk there—look up the trains, and let Mrs. Endicott know at once."

The three days before Saturday were trying days. Margery grew more and more tired and her bones ached wearily; but she indignantly repudiated Polly's suggestion that she go to the doctor.

"There's nothing the matter with me at all," she declared. "It's just that I need some fun—something besides these old lessons."

Polly shook her head doubtfully, but held her peace.

Saturday morning came at last, and she and Sarah started off; Margery in her best blue suit and velvet hat, and Sarah resplendent in a purple bonnet with awe-inspiring bunches of black jet rising from its apex.

They had some difficulty in finding the

house when they reached the city, and both were tired and hungry before they finally discovered it. Under the strength of her own resolves and the happy, simple life she was leading, Margery had largely discarded old faults of petulance and discontent; but to-day, under the influence of excitement and the fact that she was really far from well, she snapped at Sarah until that patient individual declared:

"It's somebody else ye'll have to be after getting ter take yez to the city next time, Miss Margery."

The house of Mrs. Endicott's aunt was a sedate, old-fashioned one of red brick with a white Colonial doorway, and those inevitable white marble steps, the perpetual scrubbing of which visitors to Philadelphia find so amusing. Its red-brick, white-stepped neighbors and the street on which they stood all had the same air of settled self-complacency and serene dignity. Across the street a high brick wall of soft faded red enclosed a group of stately old buildings.

"What's that over there, Sarah?" asked Margery, with a nod toward the wall, as she

pulled the old-fashioned door-bell below the engraved silver name-plate.

"Horspital," stated Sarah, still offended, her nose in the air.

The door opened and Sarah, finding that Mrs. Endicott truly was staying within and that all was well, left Margery and started off to spend the day with her sister.

"Wait a minute," exclaimed Margery to the astonished butler, and dashed down the steps and along the street, calling:

"Sarah! Sarah!"

Sarah turned. "Yes, Miss Margery?"

"Sarah, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be so cross."

Sarah folded her hands over the neat hand-bag she carried and tried in vain to look still offended. "Oh, go long wid ye," she grumbled.

Feeling better satisfied, Margery ran up the steps again, and was ushered into a stately, old-fashioned parlor, long and narrow, and filled with the heavy, depressing walnut furniture of the mid-Victorian era.

There was the soft rustle of skirts, a light footfall, and Mrs. Endicott, as young and as pretty as though she had no tall, grown-up

"HERE WE ARE, AUNTIE."

daughter to call attention to her years, stood in the doorway.

"Margery, dear child! I am so glad to see you. Did I tell you I had a letter from your mother this week? I'm so glad that I'll be able to report that I've seen you." Slipping her arm through Margery's, Mrs. Endicott led her up the stairs to a big sunny room extending across the front of the house.

"Here we are, Auntie," she announced to an old, very much wrinkled lady sitting by the window. "This is my aunt, Margery—Mrs. Russell. I'm so sorry, dear, that Katherine won't be here. She has gone to a luncheon and theatre-party—she's really having quite a gay visit."

Margery curtsied to the old lady, who extended two fingers to her with a "children should be seen and not heard" expression that was disconcerting. "Hum," she said, looking at Margery through the eye-glasses holding a precarious place on her extremely aquiline nose. "Long lashes and red cheeks—signs of weak eyes and tuberculosis."

Margery's cheeks grew redder still with embarrassment and a wild desire to laugh. Mrs.

Endicott kindly led her away to take off her hat and coat before the old lady had time to make any more disconcerting remarks.

"Auntie is very old," she explained, sitting down by the dressing table and watching Margery straighten out her hair-ribbon before the glass. "But she is wonderful for all her eighty-seven years—a mind many a younger person might be proud of. That ribbon's just right—don't touch it any more or you'll spoil the effect. You are looking well, child—I believe the country air and the change are doing you good."

A touch of fever and Mrs. Russell's remark had indeed given Margery a most brilliant color. Later in the day Mrs. Endicott was to be not so well satisfied.

Before they went back to the sitting-room, Mrs. Endicott had many questions to ask: was Margery happy in her new surroundings? —did she like her school and her schoolmates?—was her grandfather better? The first excitement over, Margery felt strangely tired and faint, and answered the questions listlessly in spite of a strained effort to appear cheerful.

"I do hope luncheon will be ready soon," she thought to herself as she sank down on a low chair. "Maybe I'll feel better then—it's been ages since breakfast. Yes, Aunt Kate," she said aloud in answer to another of Mrs. Endicott's questions, "I do have to study pretty hard."

"I hope you aren't studying too hard—your eyes look a little heavy, dear. Now suppose we go in to luncheon."

Unused to old Philadelphia houses, it seemed very amusing to Margery to have the dining-room on the second floor and everything brought up from the kitchen on a dumb-waiter. She wondered whimsically if the whole house were topsy-turvy, and if the attic was in the basement and the coal-cellar was on the roof. Mrs. Russell, finding that Margery's lungs were perfectly healthy, and that she was not related to any of the old Philadelphia families with which she herself was connected, took no more interest in her, and ate her luncheon with single-minded absorption.

Mrs. Endicott and Margery were a little late in finishing luncheon and leaving the house, and the curtain had gone up as they

reached the theatre and took their places. The play itself was of the type lately so popular, in which an angelic child enters a village or small town and by the aid of a few catch words leads its entire population, including its most hardened sinner, to happiness and success. Ordinarily, Margery would have seen the absurdities of the play, but to-day, really ill and made homesick by the presence of Mrs. Endicott, and also carried away by the beauty of the production and the excellence of the acting, she wept with an abandon only equaled by the fat man in a box who flourished his handkerchief alternately between his streaming eyes and the top of his bald head.

The first act was quite normal and even had gleams of humor, for the heroine had not yet gone into the reforming business, and the grown-ups, all unconscious of the fate hanging over them, were natural and amusing. In the second act the young reformer had begun her work, and everybody was being changed all round; even the cross gentleman of the story. He was so delighted with the results of being reformed that he at

once made the angelic heroine his heiress, after the pleasing fashion of middle-aged bachelors in plays and stories—and nowhere else. Only the pretty young lady, who wore the most bewitching of frocks, and who was supposed to be middle-aged, although she did not look it, and who was also secretly and hopelessly in love with the cross gentleman who had changed his nature—of course, she did not tell anybody about it, except the audience—remained implacable. She simply refused to be reformed. The audience didn't know what to do about her; it could not help admiring her because she was so pretty, and feeling sorry for her, too; and yet it had a natural horror of any one so ungrateful as to refuse so excellent a chance to be reformed. Just as it had decided that it really must disapprove of her, the heroine was deprived of her powers of locomotion. (Here Margery and the fat man outdid each other in weeping.) The pretty lady felt so sorry that she reformed just as quick as a wink and the audience with a long sigh of relief realized that she had wanted to all along, only pride wouldn't let her.

The last act was a mixture of sadness and happiness. After several harrowing episodes, a shock to her nerves enabled the heroine to walk again. Before the curtain went down she had once more brought happiness to everybody, even to the pretty lady and the once-cross gentleman, the latter fortunately having suddenly realized that he had been in love with the pretty lady for years and years.

During the performance Mrs. Endicott had watched Margery anxiously, seeing in her tears far more than the emotions aroused by the play. As they went out of the theatre with the slowly moving throng, she met an acquaintance, and Margery heard her say something about "an old man, and invalid. Dreary, and not very wholesome atmosphere, I am afraid."

Margery wondered vaguely what she meant, but her head was feeling too heavy for her to care.

"Just time for tea," said Mrs. Endicott with a glance at the big clock on the city hall tower. She led the way through some slowly revolving doors, down a long luxurious corridor where was assembled a sprinkling of men

and many women, to a famous tea-room. The orchestra was playing a melancholy air, and as Margery took her place at the little table and slipped off her furs, her eyes again filled with tears; a fact which Mrs. Endicott was quick to notice. In her eagerness to be cheering she promptly ordered a particularly indigestible and delicious concoction of ice-cream and pastry for her guest. Just as they were finishing their ices Katherine with another girl and two young men came in, and catching sight of Mrs. Endicott and Margery joined them. Katherine Endicott was even prettier than her mother, and Margery looked up to her with all the reverence a younger girl has for one who has reached the real, grown-up young lady stage.

"Well, honey bunch," said Katherine affectionately, sitting down beside Margery, "how is the world treating you?" Then noticing with surprise her heavy eyes kindly did not wait for an answer, but plunged into an amusing description of the luncheon and theatre party she had been attending. The young man with the very turned-up nose and twinkly blue eyes joined in with so

comical an account of the leading lady's vicissitudes that Margery laughed the first spontaneous laugh she had been able to achieve all day.

"That's all very well—you can laugh," declared the young man in a stage whisper. "But it really was very sad, I assure you."

According to appointment Sarah was waiting at the door as they came out. With a kiss and a long searching look, Mrs. Endicott said good-bye to Margery.

"Keep up your courage, dear," she urged, "and don't get too blue. Something pleasant will turn up—if I have to make it."

CHAPTER VI

LA GRIPPE

THE church bell of old St. Peter's stopped ringing with a final clang just as Polly, somewhat breathless, slipped into her place between her father and mother. Across the aisle, Dick and Bunnie and little Benjamin had already taken their seats, Dick wearing that peculiar, preternaturally solemn expression he assumed at no other time and place than on Sunday and in church. Polly passed over him with a quick, amused glance to the big pew nearer the front of the church where Margery usually sat. It was empty.

"Poor Margie," thought Polly as the choir came in and she stood up for the opening hymn. "I hope that she isn't ill."

Meanwhile, Dr. Huston was standing at the foot of Margery's bed, somewhat serious under his brusque, jovial manner.

"Well, young woman," he demanded, "what does this mean? I thought you had more sense than to go and get the grippe?"

Margery smiled wanly, but did not feel equal to an answer.

"It's not a dangerous attack," the doctor told Sarah, anxiously detaining him outside of Margery's door. "Her youth and health are a great point in her favor. I am glad she has you to look after her—I'll send a nurse just as soon as I can get hold of one. It's too bad that Miss Tucker is away."

Margery was not critically ill, but her recovery was long and tedious. Her bones ached intolerably, and her head throbbed; there were weary, endless days when her hands seemed to swell up into enormous puffy pillows and she herself to shrink away into nothing but a miserable atom floating through space, only to have her hands change suddenly into the merest pin-points, while her head grew larger than the bed and intolerably heavy. The outside world failed to interest her in the least, and she looked with indifference and weariness at the flowers and dainties sent to her. All that she asked was that somebody

would force the giant who seemed to be crushing her bones in his cruel grip to stop and let her rest.

At last the day came when the aching almost ceased, and she was able to be propped up among the pillows; after that she began slowly but surely to get well. Her convalescence, tedious as it was at times, was also a happy one, and in after years she often looked back at it with pleasure. Her grandfather could not be persuaded that anything was too good for her, and was full of the happiest thoughts for her comfort and amusement. The nurse the doctor had sent was efficient and able, but she was neither young nor entertaining; Margery was glad when Miss Tucker, like a burst of spring sunshine, came back and took charge. Both for her sake and their own, the doctor forbade visitors; but as she grew better the telephone with its long extension cord was moved into her room. Polly telephoned faithfully every day, and reported all that was going on among the boys and girls of Renwyck's Town; the sudden popularity of Bunnie and its gradual decline; the illness of Esther's mother, and Esther's

struggles with the little brothers and sisters in her care; Sally Watson's startlingly high mark in a history examination, and Dick's low one. Deborah sent delightful little baskets packed with surprises in the form of custards and jellies.

On the fourteenth of February Margery was fairly snowed under with valentines; artistic ones, sentimental ones, comic ones, and clever, home-made ones which she valued most of all.

Now and then, Polly would leave a pile of books at the door; it would have appeared a strange mixture from any one but Polly; "Stalky and Co.," "Cranford," and the "Red Fairy Book." Margery, with equal adaptability of mind, thrilled over the schoolboy scrapes of Stalky and his fellow imps, laughed over the good ladies of Cranford and the costume they devised for Miss Betsy's cow, and loved the old, old fairy tales, heritage of an age when people were wise enough to believe in fairies and happy enough to see them.

But mainly she lay watching the boughs of the giant old cherry-tree outside her window. Never having been a particularly observing

person the close knowledge of the tree was a revelation to her. She grew to love those cherry boughs and their ever changing aspects; now black against a deep blue evening sky, now white with snow, now silvery and cold in the winter moonlight. The winter birds rested there; slate-colored juncos with their snowy breasts and quaint, sweet lisp, cheery black-capped chickadees, and now and then a little black and white downy woodpecker with its scarlet-tipped head. One morning Miss Tucker leaned out of the window, and tied a great lump of suet to the nearest branch that the birds might have the food they could not scratch from the frozen ground or pick from the snow-covered bushes.

Miss Tucker was a constant enjoyment. She had come back to the White House Farm engaged to a young medical missionary with whom, after her marriage in June, she was to go out to China. Margery was never tired of hearing about "him," and of the wonderful helpful life he and Miss Tucker were planning to have together. She took an immense interest in every detail of the wedding and designed a trousseau that would have been more

suitable for a princess than for Miss Tucker's simple needs.

As Margery lay watching the brown boughs of the cherry tree and listening to Miss Tucker's dreams of what she was going to do to make the world a better and happier place, her own mind began to float out on the great mysterious sea of the future.

"Miss Tucker," she said one afternoon, raising herself on her elbow, "I wish I could be a missionary, too."

"Dear me," replied Miss Tucker, somewhat inadequately.

"Yes, I've been thinking lots since I've been ill—and I don't want to be just a nobody, and not do anything but have a good time. I don't want to be just a frivol—I want to do something for the world, like you."

Miss Tucker was sympathetic. She guessed how much of Margery's sudden resolution was due to the romantic longings of youth, but she also knew that under Margery's nonsense and whims there was real capability and strength of purpose. She knew, too, something of the quiet good Margery's grandfather did in the world, so unostentatiously, so sim-

ply; and thought it only natural that Margery should have inherited his spirit.

"You have wonderful opportunities for doing good—simply wonderful. Fate has given you so much—youth and strength, a family and friends to aid you, and the means with which to do it."

Margery sighed. "You mean do charity work, and go and live in the slums? I wish I liked going into poor people's houses better. Besides, Papa doesn't like me to do it—he's always so afraid I'll bring home some disease."

"You're rather too young to do much charity work yet—the day has gone by when any nice, kind lady can rush into people's houses and ask a few questions and donate a few cans of soup, and then feel that her whole duty is done. Charity is a science in itself in these days."

"I wish I had some talent—I can't do a thing but sing and play—and my voice isn't big enough to sing anywhere but at home. Now, Polly is going to college, and write—and things like that, you know. And Esther is going to be a trained nurse, like you, Miss

Tucker—she'd be awfully pretty in a uniform. And Dick wants to be an architect, if his grandfather will let him, and Sam is going in the navy."

"And what is Bunnie going to be?"

"I don't know. She said one day that she would like to be an actress, or a little sister of the poor, or else get married and run a ranch. You see, Miss Tucker, everybody is to have a career but me."

"That will probably come later—there's no reason why you shouldn't have a career if you want it." Miss Tucker hesitated, looked thoughtfully out of the window, then having made up her mind to improve the occasion, crossed the room and sat down by Margery's bedside. "There is one career that you might have right now," she began. "As I go around from family to family—and a nurse sees a lot, you know—it seems to me that nothing in the world is needed quite so much as a lubricator."

"A *lubricator?*"

"A lubricator. Machinery, you know, can't run without lubricating oils. Neither can our daily lives run smoothly without

some people who can act as lubricators—some people, I mean, who are willing to do the kind little things. You remember Lowell's poem to his wife: 'She doeth little kindnesses, that others leave undone.'"

"But, Miss Tucker, I don't think that I like the sound of lubricator—it sounds, well, it sounds so greasy."

Miss Tucker laughed. "Well, there's another way of putting it then. The last time I went to a football game I did enjoy it so!—those fine, tall lads and their spirited playing, and then, the cheering! But almost as much I enjoyed the little goat on a leash that one side led out—their mascot."

Margery's fancy was tickled by the thought of the goat. "I might be a mascot," she laughed.

"Exactly—that's just what I am getting at. I don't mean to say that you need be led out on a leash between halves of a football game! I am afraid that would shock Kiley even worse than your tweed coat, which she feels is so inelegant. But there are other ways of being a mascot. The patient I had before I came here was a dear old gentleman who had

had a hard life, but had finally managed to pull out into a very successful, happy old age. 'And it was all due to my daughter,' he used to say. 'She was my mascot—so helpful, so brave always, so full of little thoughtfulnesses.'"

Margery lay still, thinking. She was decidedly impressed by Miss Tucker's little talk; besides, many times during her illness her mind had gone back to the play she had seen that day in the city with Mrs. Endicott. The girl in the play had reformed a whole community and brought happiness to it—wouldn't it be wonderful if she could reform Renwyck's Town and bring joy to it!

She raised herself on her elbow again. "But, Miss Tucker, if you have a career you can speak about it—if you're just a mascot you can't go around talking about that. People would think you were crazy!"

"Well, I think that is rather nice. To me it spoils things to speak about them too much. Besides, remember that wonderful essay of Stevenson's about the lantern-bearers carrying lanterns under their cloaks, and being happy and content just because they know

that they are there. You can carry *your* lantern under your cloak."

Miss Tucker went back to the chart she was making out for the doctor's inspection, and Margery cuddled down among the pillows, thinking over all the people in Renwyck's Town to whom she could be a mascot. They were a disappointingly happy lot. The girl in the play had had a much easier time. But with characteristic determination Margery decided to mascot somebody if she died in the attempt. There was Gertrude Brown—but then, everybody did things for her. Mrs. Sykes' case was similar. None of the girls and boys of her own age needed mascoting—that was plain! Imagine being a mascot to Bunnie; so pretty, so popular in a dashing sort of a way, so sure of herself! Or, fancy being a mascot to Polly! Margery's mind flew back to Polly as she had been at her party; so unconscious, so full of generous pleasure at her guests' enjoyment. But there was another person at Polly's party; with a thrill of satisfaction, Margery remembered Miss Patty Kirkby. Sweet, patient Miss Patty was just the person upon whom to begin her

good work. But how was she to go about it? How was she to dig up thistles of drudgery and plant the flowers of happiness? She thought of Polly's wish that a fairy prince in his coach and four would carry off Miss Patty. A fairy prince, she decided with a smile of amusement, would be the best spade with which to do landscape gardening in Miss Patty's life—but where was he to be found? She reviewed the unattached men in Renwyck's Town.

Miss Tucker glanced at her and saw that she was thinking deeply, and with a smile of satisfaction tiptoed out of the room, feeling that she had not spent a profitless half-hour, and that she had wisely sown good seed in a fertile ground. Had she realized with how much more ardor than discretion Margery was already raising those seeds, and just what the consequences were to be, she would not have been so confident.

Left alone, Margery turned on her pillows so that she could watch the firelight flickering across the dim room. The last snowstorm of the season spattered itself against the windows, and the black boughs of the

cherry-tree turned white against a steel-gray sky.

"There's Mr. Montgomery," she thought drowsily; "he might do for Miss Patty—but he has such funny white eyelashes. And there's Esther's uncle; but he looks so cross. And there's Henry Wadsworth, but he's too young, and Mr. Jones is too old. And there is ——"

Lulled by the dimness of the room and the spatter of the snow, she fell asleep and dreamed that she was Miss Patty's bridesmaid, and wore a riding-costume and Sarah's best bonnet, and carried a goat as a mascot instead of a bouquet.

Suddenly a brusque, good-natured voice spoke through her dreams. "Well, little girl, how are the old bones to-day? Getting young again, are they?"

Margery forced her eyes open and saw the doctor bending over her. With a yawn she sat up and rubbed her eyes. "I was asleep," she announced, quite needlessly.

The doctor crossed the room and turned on the light. "So it would seem," he laughed.

The light flooded the room, and at the same

instant another light flashed into Margery's mind. "Why, of course," she thought, "I wonder if the doctor won't do for Miss Patty!"

CHAPTER VII

MISS PATTY

"MARGERY child, don't you think that you could be less fidgety?" expostulated Mr. Morris. "You are worse than a bumblebee buzzing about."

Margery put down the big library shears she had been opening and shutting with sudden, nerve-racking clicks, and turned her attention to making lunges in the air with the paper-cutter at an imaginary enemy. She had already upset the tongs with a clash in attempting to put another log on the fire, drummed loudly and monotonously on the window-pane with her finger-nails, knocked over a screen and dropped a book; all of which her grandfather had endured with patience until her final performance with the shears had called forth a protest.

"Grandpapa, I have something to say to

you—something very important," and Margery dragged a big, padded chair across the room, its castors squeaking a rebuke every inch of the way.

"Yes, dear," answered her grandfather as gently as though every nerve were not registering its disapproval of Margery's suddenly clumsy ways.

"Don't you think that it would be nice if we invited Dr. Huston and Miss Patty Kirkby here for dinner to-night?"

"Certainly. Why—er, certainly, certainly. But don't you think that somebody rather—er, younger, would be more lively? Polly, for instance?"

"But it's Miss Patty and Dr. Huston that I want."

"Oh, very well, then. I should think that you had seen enough of the doctor lately—but I suppose you enjoy Miss Patty's music. I shall be glad, now, when you are able to be back at school again. This being cooped up in the house is not good for you, I am sure—and you are certainly growing very restless. I shall speak to the doctor to-night about your going back to school."

"Grandpapa, don't you think it would be nice," she began, drawing her chair closer to him, "if the doctor and Miss Patty ——" She was about to launch out in a full recital of her plans, but her grandfather, dreading lest she should cause the castors to squeak again, waved her toward the hall and the telephone.

"You had better telephone at once," he declared. "They might be going out."

Margery left the room, and Mr. Morris, glad to have his library to himself in peace and quietness once more, turned back to his *Quarterly Review.*

Miss Patty had no telephone, but by dint of telephoning to a neighbor the message was conveyed that Miss Margery Morris desired her company for dinner that night, and would provide a suitable escort. The small boy who took the message returned in a remarkably short time to pant into the telephone receiver that "Miss — Patty — says—she'll—come"; and Margery turned her attention to providing the suitable escort. The doctor seemed amused and rather pleased at Margery's invitation and accepted at once.

"Tell your grandfather that I'll bring him

a book on South America that he will enjoy. What's that about stopping for Patty Kirkby? Remember, I'm a little hard of hearing. Oh, yes, yes, now I understand. All right, I'll 'beau' her out, as the country people say. Good-bye."

"Margery," called her grandfather, "why did you ask the doctor to bring Miss Patty? He may not find it convenient. Why not send the car for her?"

"Oh, it's more romantic this way."

"Romantic?" smiled her grandfather. "What an idea! Dear me, what funny creatures schoolgirls are." Except for her recent spasm of clattering tongs and dropping books which he quite understood came from restless nerves, her grandfather had enjoyed every minute of Margery's stay with him. Especially did her schoolgirl fads and fancies amuse him. Now, chuckling, he called again to her:

"Come and tell me how it is romantic."

But Margery, thankful to have something interesting to do, had already hurried to the kitchen to consult with Kiley over the menu. She was sorry that Miss Tucker was not at

home. Having decided that Margery needed some heavier frocks, the nurse had gone on a shopping tour to the city, where she was to spend the night with some friends. Later, before she left the White House Farm, she was to take Margery to town and aid her to select such additions as were needed to her spring wardrobe.

Mr. Morris was proud that evening of the ease and naturalness with which Margery acted as hostess. She drew out the doctor to tell his best stories, especially the famous one about the long ago time when he and another college boy had serenaded the wrong girl; and led Miss Patty on to talk with a tact that made her grandfather beam with satisfaction.

Margery herself was equally proud of her grandfather as host. "Grandpapa is a perfect dear, isn't he?" she remarked in an undertone to Dr. Huston after dinner, sitting down beside him on the big davenport by the fire. "What's that Miss Patty is playing? Oh, yes, 'Consolation.' She must be playing it for me—I need consolation so badly. I'm so tired of being cooped up this way! Mayn't I go back to school soon?"

"Your grandfather and I have talked it over, and we have it all arranged that you shall go back to school on Monday."

"Oh, goody! I'm so ——"

"That is," added the doctor, "providing the weather is clear. But, shh—I want to hear this." Miss Patty's fingers had wandered into the Moonlight Sonata. "Ah, beautiful, beautiful," he sighed as the music ceased.

Margery leaned forward and looked across the hall to the reception-room, where Miss Patty, a charming figure in her simple low-cut black silk, sat at the piano.

"Doctor," she began, her resolution strengthened, "don't you think that it would do Gertrude Brown a great deal of good to have Miss Patty play for her sometimes? She loves music so."

The doctor was plainly pleased. Any thought for the crippled girl for whose tragic existence he had such kindly sympathy always delighted him.

"Yes," he agreed, "that is a good scheme! You and Polly have been pretty good about going to see Gertrude, but I fancy Patty's

fingers could get more music out of that old piano of the Browns' than yours could—and Polly certainly doesn't count in the musical line. I'll speak to Patty about it."

Margery plunged on: "It will be hard for her to get out to Gertrude's—perhaps you had better take her in your carriage."

Again the doctor smiled his approval. "How like your grandfather you are getting to be, child—he's one of the kindest, most thoughtful human beings it has ever been my good fortune to meet."

Somewhat flushed and embarrassed the young match-maker left the good doctor serenely unconscious that she had designs on his bachelor independence, and went to play a duet with Miss Patty.

That the doctor had acted promptly on her suggestion that Miss Patty's music would be a boon to poor bedridden Gertrude Brown, Margery learned the next day, when Polly and Esther came to spend the afternoon with her.

"We saw Dr. Huston and Miss Patty drive out and stop at Gertrude Brown's," Polly announced, as she pulled off her coat and curled

up on the window-seat in Margery's room. "Marge, just as soon as you are gadding about again we must go to see Gertrude. I went one day about two weeks ago—but I'm afraid that she found just me, by myself, somewhat tame."

Margery was silent. She was wondering whether or not she should take Polly and Esther into her confidence. Ought she to tell them of her dream of being a mascot?—or, ought she to follow Miss Tucker's suggestion and like the lantern-bearers carry her ambition under a cloak, happy in the consciousness that it was there? She decided to feel her way.

"What are you going to be, Esther, when you grow up?" she asked somewhat abruptly.

Esther looked up from the shoe-lace she was tightening. "Oh, I don't know—a trained nurse, probably. And you?"

"I'm going to be a writer," put in Polly. "Then I'll write a novel and have a thrilling scene of a long hospital ward with rows and rows of beds. And I'll have Esther there in a blue uniform and a little white cap on top of her curls—her hair is as straight as a poker,

but the straightness won't show in a novel—and, of course, she will be smoothing fevered brows. She will go and bang her hand on one brow, and then she will go and bang it on another. The cr-r-reature in the end bed will be so ungrateful that he won't allow Esther to do any smoothing, and they will have 'words' over the matter, but our brave nurse will come off victorious, and the brow will be smoothed."

"And what will you make Margery do in your novel?" laughed Esther.

"I will show a great operatic stage. Everybody in the boxes will be twittering with excitement, for it will be rumored that the great, the radiantly lovely Madame Oleomargerine Morriscovitch is to make her first appearance as a singer on this side of the Atlantic or any other ocean. The violins will coo softly, like a pig under a gate, and from the wings Margery, beautiful beyond the power of pen to describe, will advance to the footlights to sing. With unapproachable art she will try to hit the notes. With marvelous agility she will bound above them, around them, and below them. Enchanted, the audience will rise as

one—and, rushing to the box-office, will demand its money back."

Laughing, Margery stood up. "Madame Oleomargerine Morriscovitch with go downstairs and get you some apples as a reward for your efforts at prophecy, Polly. If you don't succeed as a novelist, you can become a fortune-teller."

Still laughing, Margery ran down the back-stairs to the pantry, where she knew there was a basket of apples. "It's no use trying to talk to those girls about anything serious," she thought as she selected half-a-dozen of the biggest and rosiest apples, "when they are in that kind of mood."

She sighed as she opened the stair door; she felt to-day, somehow, that she wanted Polly's sympathy and understanding. "I'll just have to keep it all to myself," she mused, picking up an apple that had rolled out of the bowlful she was carrying. "I don't believe I'll even say anything about Miss Patty and Dr. Huston to Miss Tucker. She'd think that they are too old, or something, to be romantic—she doesn't take much interest in anybody but her fiancé, anyway."

"How's Bunnie getting along with the boys and girls at school?" she said aloud, as she entered her room and held out her bowl of fruit.

Polly selected an apple. "Well," she said slowly, "of course, she was awfully popular at first. She's pretty—and she's ever so easy to get to know. But she talks so much about herself—and she's always saying, 'Now, I'm different from other people.' And she doesn't seem to care much about just having a jolly time with a crowd of the boys and girls. She wants to get off with one of the boys, alone, and have him crazy about her, and all that kind of silly thing. It makes Dick tired. And now, she is with Harry Richards all the time. Dick doesn't like that a little bit, either."

"Harry Richards? Is he still at home?"

"Yes, didn't I tell you? He was expelled from school, and it's too late in the year for him to get into another. He's not doing anything, now—except wasting his time. He is spending too much money, and worrying his mother half to death. Father feels very bad about it, but he can't step in and do anything."

"I'm glad that Dick and Sam and the boys we know best aren't like that," remarked Esther, carefully polishing another apple.

"Harry makes me cross," went on Polly, "even if he is my third cousin. He's so superior over the other boys, and calls them 'country jays.'"

"He had better be careful," chuckled Esther; "pride goeth before destruction, you know. To-day at luncheon Nancy finished by taking a piece of bread and wiping up her plate. Mother reproved her for it, and Jimmy piped up in the most superior fashion, 'Yes, Nan-nan, I know better dan to do dat—I lick mine!'"

CHAPTER VIII

TEA STACKS

A SOFT spring breeze fluttered the window-curtains, and rustled the leaves of the book lying open on Margery's desk. In a week or two the cherry-tree outside the window would be a mass of white bloom, and now a fat, ruddy-breasted robin sat on one of the boughs eyeing the tree contemplatively as though he were thinking of the feast of cherries he would have when June had come. Margery put down her hair-brush and watched him, her hair hanging like a veil on either side of her face.

"It's all very well for you to say, 'cheer-up, cheer-ee,' all the time, you old rascal," she called to him; "you wouldn't feel a bit cheer-upy either, if you had to go to school on a wonderful morning like this!"

The robin cocked his head on one side.

"Cheer-up," he retorted, and spreading his wings flew away to seek other society.

Margery laughed as she brushed back her hair, and tied on a wide black hair-ribbon. "It's such a perfect day," she thought; "I wish something nice would happen right away."

What did happen was the gong for breakfast, and hastily slipping a clean middy-blouse over her head, Margery ran down the stairs. It was a beautiful early spring morning; outside, on the lawn the maple and elm trees were bursting into bud, and down in the garden the crocuses and snow-drops blooming, and here and there, in a sheltered corner, a daffodil or two.

With the spring sunshine and the spring breezes came spring restlessness, and school that morning was hard upon teachers and scholars alike. Margery, struggling to keep her mind on the fact that "in the common system, the mantissæ of the logarithms of numbers having the same sequence of figures are equal," and her eyes from the purple grackles promenading haughtily across the school yard, found herself longing to run away.

"'And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to stay in here all day?'"

she misquoted to herself.

The haughtiest of the grackles looked up at the window, his head on one side, and as if in agreement gave the peculiar creaking call, like a rusty gate, of his kind; forgetting herself Margery suddenly laughed aloud.

The class turned and stared. "Margery," reproved Teacher Rachel, and Margery, red and amused, retired behind her book.

At last school and luncheon were over and Margery sat down at her desk to begin a letter to her mother. A bumblebee, less romantic but as certain harbinger of spring as the blue bird, came buzzing through the open window and droned slowly about the room. Hastily deciding to postpone her letter, Margery ran down-stairs and out across the terrace to the garden.

"I'll go to see Deborah," she thought, pushing open the little white garden-gate, "and take her some flowers. She hasn't any snowdrops, I know."

As she came out of the garden again, she saw coming up the driveway a familiar red-wheeled cart.

"Hello, Margie," called Polly as soon as she was within hailing distance. "I have the most wonderful thing to tell you! Do say you will do it! Promise you will do it!"

Bewildered, Margery promptly answered, "Yes."

An answer which Polly as she climbed out of the cart ungratefully informed her was criminally reckless. "How do you know, you blessed infant, but what I wanted you to sign your own death warrant? Come on," as she finished tying Spy to the hitching post, "let's go where we can talk. Shall we go up to your room?"

"There's a bumblebee up there."

"That won't make any difference," answered Polly serenely. "I'm not afraid of bees." Arm in arm with Margery she entered the house, warbling, "My name is little Jock Elliot, and wha dare meddle wi' me?" with her usual spirited independence as to tune.

Margery opened the door of her room, and the bumblebee, still in possession, buzzed

toward them. With a shriek "Little Jock Elliot" closed her eyes and ducked.

"'I'm not afraid of bees,'" giggled Margery, taking off her sweater and with it valorously waving the intruder out of the window. "Now, Polly, do tell me the excitement!"

"That beast very nearly made me forget it! Guess what it is. We—you and I—are going to Princeton!"

"To college?"

"To tea."

"But how?"

"It's this way: Mother's friend, Mrs. Matthews, who lives at Exeter,—that's up the state, you know—has invited Mother and me to visit her next week. As we are going up in the car, she suggested that we start a day earlier, and stop for her at Princeton. Her son is a junior there, and she is going to see him. And then she added that I might bring one of my friends, and Jimmie Matthews would have tea for us in his rooms. So, of course, I chose you as the friend to go with us. Do say you'll go. Let's ask your grandfather at once."

Mr. Morris was not only willing that Mar-

gery should go with the Jamesons, but heartily endorsed the plan. Spring vacation would begin in a day or two, and he was glad for her to have the added benefit of the little trip.

That plans are easier made than executed, Margery and Polly found out, almost to their despair, during the next few days. William, the Jamesons' chauffeur, gave the scheme its first setback by developing a felon on his right hand which incapacitated him from running the car. Mr. Jameson was too busy to take his place, and it looked as though the trip would have to be given up, until some one remembered that Sam Bennet was in the habit of running his father's car, which was of the same make as that of the Jamesons'. Accordingly, Sam was invited to join the party as chauffeur, and protector against any such stray highwaymen and speed traps as might infest their way. After that had been satisfactorily arranged Polly gave everybody a scare by admitting a sore throat. That passed over, happily; but a fresh calamity appeared on the horizon. Mrs. Matthews' cook left, preventing her from entertaining and threatening her visit to Princeton.

However, that went the way of the other disasters. Mrs. Jameson decided to undertake the trip in spite of the cook, and to stay at the hotel in Exeter, where she could see Mrs. Matthews and yet not impose the burden of hospitality upon her.

As they were to stay at the hotel Dick was invited to join the party to give comfort and support to Sam; Esther was included, and since Dick was going, Bunnie, also. Mrs. Matthews declared that they must stop at Princeton, just as though she were to be there, and she wrote to her son Jimmy to expect them.

The girls looked forward especially to the visit to Princeton. During her illness, Margery had read a delightful story in which several young girls and their chaperone had taken tea with some college boys in their rooms. The young ladies in the book had had a most successful afternoon. Not only had innumerable young men, catching but a fleeting glimpse of the fair ones ascending steps and traversing quadrangles, been so overcome by their beauty and charm that they had hastened to be included in the tea-party,

and to hurl themselves into hopeless love, but also, the girls had been showered at every turn by big bunches of orchids and American beauties and giant boxes of choice bonbons! A prodigality that would have forced the average college boy to put his clothes "in hock" for a month. Margery, with her somewhat lavish ideas of how things ought to be done, had been greatly impressed by this episode in the book and she had insisted on each of the girls reading it as an example of what they were to expect. They had all joined with her in being "thrilled," and even Polly had been impressed, although her only comment had been:

"Bejabers, if it was mesilf that wad be visitin' a college, it wadn't be on me that the bhoys wad be wantin' to hang the orchids, an' roses, an' geraniums, an' dandelions they was handin' out so ginerous an' free."

The time fairly crept by until the day of starting. Not even the anxious watching of every cloud, and the packing and repacking of their dress-suit cases, that they might contain everything that might be needed and nothing that was not, could make the time

go any faster for the four happy, excited girls.

On the afternoon before the start the sky became overcast, the wind rose, and the rain pelted down. Margery and Polly telephoned each other despairingly and went to bed depressed, feeling a touching and sincere sympathy with Noah.

By six o'clock the next morning, Margery was out of bed, anxiously leaning out of the window to inspect the weather. All was as it should be: bright, warm and clear, and every twig and blade of grass sparkling from the rain of the evening before.

By eight, she had had her breakfast and was speeding along the road toward the Jamesons', where the party was to assemble. There the car was standing before the door; Sam, very professional in ulster, leggings, and goggles, was already at the wheel, while Polly stowed packages away in the tonneau.

"Oh, Margie," she cried, giving a leap from the step over the pile of dress-suit cases waiting on the sidewalk, "have you got your bag ready? William and Father are hunting up some more straps. The car is going to

be plastered with dress-suit cases—people will think that we are a traveling circus. Dick and Bunnie are in the house helping Mother to do some extra stunts to the tea-basket. We're to stop for Esther—we're going to Greenwich first—it's out of the way, but it is so interesting, and we want you and Bunnie to see it. Is your coat warm enough?"

Mr. Jameson came out of the house. "Polly, Polly," he remonstrated, "I wish some of that energy that goes to waste in talking could be applied to running the car—it would save a lot of gasoline. Don't you think that you had better see if your mother needs any help instead of chattering so much?"

Polly obediently turned toward the house. "I wish you were going with us, Daddy," she remarked.

"I wish so, too," exclaimed Mrs. Jameson, appearing at the door. "Now that I am right up to it, I really feel quite apprehensive about taking the responsibility of all these youngsters."

"Nonsense, Mary," comforted her husband. "You'll feel all right when you once get on

the road. Nothing can happen with Dick and Sam here. Are you ready? Well, suppose you start, then. Climb in, Dick and Elizabeth."

"There's Esther," cried Polly as they turned in at the Crowells' gate. "Doesn't she look pretty in that veil? Hello, Jimmykins. Good-morning, Mr. Crowell."

Esther's little brother Jimmie wailed lustily to go with them and Esther, leaning back to wave to him, seemed quite subdued for the moment. "I suppose I really oughtn't to leave home just now," she remarked to Mrs. Jameson.

"I never left home yet, my dear," Mrs. Jameson consoled her, "without feeling that way. I even do to-day."

"Now we are really off," declared Polly rapturously as they turned into the smooth, white, level turnpike, stretching straight ahead of them as far as they could see. "Oh, isn't it a wonderful day?"

The sun shone warmly down on them, and the soft spring breezes brought the fresh clean smell of newly plowed fields. It was one of those rarely lovely days in early April which usually end in tempestuous showers, as though Nature

herself could not stand the sight of so much beauty without tears. The way led through a wide open country; now past some large prosperous farm, with its big old-fashioned mansion and gigantic barns, all surrounded by trees, set far back from the turnpike amid well-cultivated fields; now past a little cottage close to the road, its dooryard gay with yellow forsythia and jonquils just coming into bloom. The peach orchards were turning pink, and the great strawberry beds stretched like long green ribbons across acre after acre of white sand. Now and then there was a flash of brilliant blue, and a blue-bird would dart from a swaying bough. The robins chirped manfully, and the quaint little song-sparrows in their Quakerish brown and gray sang from the hedges.

Polly and Margery, perched on the side seats, chattered to each other like magpies. "Polly! Did you see that?" Or, "Margery, look at that bird!—and," with a shriek of ecstasy, "there's a lamb!"

Dick sat on the front seat with Sam, offering him valuable advice. "See if you can't hit that old hen, Sam!—pshaw, you missed

it! There's a cow in the middle of the road ahead—any duffer could hit that! Mrs. Jameson," calling back, "you'll have to dismiss Sam; he has no style as a chauffeur at all!"

"Sam! Sam!" suddenly shrieked Polly, rising to her feet. "Stop! Stop!"

Sam put on the brake with a suddenness that sent Margery on her knees and nearly catapulted Polly over Dick's head.

"Little darky boy," Polly explained, hastily getting out of the car and running back along the road.

Sam began slowly to back the car, his face, as much of it as was visible beneath his goggles, unusually white. "Did I run over anything?" he gasped.

Dick, leaning out of the car, suddenly laughed. "Polly has found two little darkies with a basket of arbutus," he said, climbing out of the car to follow her.

In a few minutes, Dick and Polly came back, their hands full of the lovely, fragrant blossoms. Not the pale, stiff things sold as arbutus in city streets, but shell-pink, dewy and fragrant.

"A quarter, please, Mother," demanded Polly. "The youngsters will sell them for fifteen cents—but it is wicked to buy so much beauty for so little."

Dick took the money back to the boys, and Polly put some of the arbutus aside to take to Mrs. Matthews, and divided the rest into bunches for everybody to wear. Mrs. Jameson and the girls were all wearing long dark coats and close, small hats that would keep rebellious locks from whipping in their faces.

"Those flowers look fine against your dark coats," remarked Sam as the girls pinned on the arbutus. "Altogether, you look very well. All except your hats," he added with a laugh; "why don't you wear a lace cap like Mrs. Jobson?" An allusion to the wife of the local butcher, who was one of those women who consider a lace-trimmed boudoir cap the most suitable thing for motoring. "Great Scott, I forgot," fishing in his pocket, "that I'd copied Mrs. Jobson's bonnet for the occasion."

Taking off his cloth cap, Sam pulled on a bright red rubber bathing cap borrowed from his sister, which he had adorned with a wreath

of somewhat battered yellow roses and a flaunting purple bow.

The girls shrieked with laughter. "If Mrs. Jobson could see that bow," declared Polly, "she would turn absolutely green with envy."

By half-past eleven they had pulled into the quaint village of Greenwich, with its one, long, elm-bordered street and old colonial houses.

"This is a perfect Rip Van Winkle of a town," remarked Mrs. Jameson as they rolled slowly along. "A hundred years ago or more it went to sleep, and it is still slumbering peacefully. I hope it will never wake up—it is too attractive as it is."

"What happened here?" asked Bunnie.

"Several things. It used to be an old port of entry, and packets from over the sea sailed up the creek to unload here. There was wealth then, and people built fine houses—as you can still see. But the most important thing they did here was to burn the tea when the stamp act was bothering people. Instead of throwing the tea overboard as they did in Boston, they unloaded it and brought it up to a field farther on, where they had a glorious

bonfire with it. Drive on a little bit, Sam, and we'll come to the monument they put up a few years ago to mark the spot."

They stopped before the public square with the monument and everybody got out to read the inscription. An automobile following them stopped also, and a group of pretty girls alighted.

"I wonder if some of those old ladies who were so fond of their tea didn't feel sad when they saw it all going up in smoke," observed Sam.

"One old gentleman did," retorted Polly. "Don't blame it all on the old ladies. There was a man named Stacks who pocketed so much of the tea that he positively looked nearly twice his size. Of course, he was found out, and after that he was always called 'Tea-Stacks.'"

"Our friends in Philadelphia were more thrifty," said Mrs. Jameson. "Far be it from them to waste good tea by burning it or throwing it overboard."

"What did they do, Mrs. Jameson?" asked Dick. "Keep Sam interested," he added in a whisper.

Mrs. Jameson glanced at Sam standing absorbed before the monument, blissfully unconscious that he was still wearing the gay rubber cap with its flaunting purple bow sticking out at the back of his head. Beyond him stood the group of pretty girls from the other automobile, staring with mingled amusement and astonishment at his head-dress. "It's a shame—I'm going to tell him," Mrs. Jameson whispered back, but at imploring looks from the rest of her party she swallowed a laugh and went on:

"Oh, when they heard in Philadelphia that a tea-ship was coming up the river they formed a committee which they called the 'Committee of Tarring and Feathering' and sent the captain of the ship a letter. It said, if I remember correctly: 'What think ye, Captain, of a halter around your neck—and ten gallons of liquid tar decanted on your pate?' And then, there was something about the 'feathers of a dozen wild geese laid over the tar to enliven your appearance.'"

Dick wrapped his long arms about himself and doubled up back of Sam. "A rubber

bathing cap would have enlivened his appearance more," he whispered to Margery.

"Then the letter said," went on Mrs. Jameson gravely, although her eyes twinkled, "'Only think seriously of this, Captain—fly to the place from whence you came—fly without hesitation—fly without the formality of a protest—and above all, Captain, fly without the wild geese feathers.'"

"What happened?" asked Sam, really interested. He cast a scornful glance at his giggling friends. "Don't mind them, Mrs. Jameson," he apologized politely; "they just don't take any interest in anything worth while."

"Why, Sam, the captain flew—without the feathers. And he took his ship and the tea with him; and Philadelphia's protest was just as effective as the Boston Tea-party—though very much less sensational." Then, in spite of the pleading looks cast at her she started to share the joke of the cap with Sam. Just then the chaperone of the other party turned to him and asked him a question about the monument.

Instinctively, Sam's hand flew to his

cap, and encountered his strange head-gear. Blushing scarlet, he pulled it off, and with a sober, almost sad expression he stepped nearer to the chaperone and the prettiest of the girls.

"Please pardon my—er, decoration," he said confidentially in a stage whisper that could be distinctly heard by his own party. "We are taking this poor half-witted fellow here," indicating Dick, "to the asylum. He gets very restless and troublesome in the automobile, so I put this on to amuse him and keep him quiet. And I forgot to take it off when we got out of the car. Yes, madame, this is the monument built to commemorate the burning of the tea."

The lady glanced at Sam's grave face and at Dick's, astonished and somewhat indignant, and burst into delighted laughter. "Oh, you boys," she exclaimed. "I have two of my own."

After they left the monument they went down to the end of the road, where the village stopped abruptly at the creek.

Polly glanced up at the huge tree by which the car was standing. "Look at that tree,

little children," she said, "while I preach you a Sunday-school lesson. As once that tree was nothing but a whip used to shoo flies off the back of a horse, so may you, little children, develop from your present—ah, ahem—worthless state into something great and wonderful like, like ——"

"The owner of Sam's bonnet," teased Dick, tossing her the rubber cap. "Or like the High Chief Fabricatoress of Tales like somebody else."

"That tree really did grow from a whip. Once upon a time, long ago, a good Quaker from here drove to Quarterly Meeting. His horse was very, very slow, and the good Quaker began to fear that meeting would be over before he ever reached it. So he climbed out of his gig and cut himself a whip, and between tickling his horse with it and brushing off the flies, he managed to get to meeting in time. When he reached home he stuck his whip in the ground, and there it is—towering above you! Disbelieve me if you dare! Now then—lay on, Macduff, to wherever luncheon will grow."

CHAPTER IX

IN THE GREENWOOD

"Oh, when shall we reach the place for dinner?" sighed Polly as they passed the old red-brick meeting house and turned their backs on Greenwich. "I'm so hungry!"

"Cheer up, Polly," urged Dick; "you look as pathetic as that phœbe bird back there on the fence post!"

"What's that?" asked Bunnie.

"The phœbes come north without their wives," explained Esther, "and sit around as dejectedly as can be until the ladies arrive. See, there's one—that little brown bird with the dark head and wings and white breast. Oh, dear!—he's gone!"

"Aha, Polly!" cried Dick before long, "there's Austen ahead of you. Put on your pretty cap now, Samuel, so as to make a stylish entrance into the metropolis!"

Past pleasant, comfortable homes, each set

in the midst of a large wooded lawn, they rolled into the main and business part of the town. Austen was a thriving, populous manufacturing place, and the streets were crowded with traffic. Sam, whose experience as chauffeur had been limited to the quiet streets of Renwyck's Town and the still quieter country lanes, found himself confused by the clanging trolley cars, the numerous automobiles and heavy trucks surging around him, and still more so by the haughty mannered traffic-policeman who stood at the crossing of the two principal streets. That lofty individual as they approached him held up his hand to stop, and Sam stopped with a prompt obedience that nearly threw his passengers out of the car.

The road cleared and the policeman motioned them to proceed. Sam unfortunately could not at that moment.

"Come on!" bawled the policeman impatiently.

In desperation Sam seized a handful of levers and the car shot back a yard or two.

"Honk! H-o-onk!" remonstrated the car back of them.

Polly rose literally to the occasion. "Sam!

Sam!" she exclaimed, standing up. "Put on the exhilarator!—I—I mean the accelerator!"

An amused bystander on the sidewalk burst into a hearty guffaw; seizing Polly by her skirts Mrs. Jameson pulled her down into her place. With a snort the car bounded forward and drew up with a flourish before the door of what advertised itself to be "Austen's leading hotel."

Polly was not the only one of the party who was hungry, and before they left the table Esther declared she was ashamed to look the waiter in the face. Luncheon over, they climbed into the car again and the serious part of the journey began.

The afternoon grew warmer and warmer, and they were glad that much of their way was to be through long arms of that great region of pine woods, known as the barrens, which reaches inward from the sea. At first the road was indifferent and sandy, and the pine-trees and scrub-oaks were stunted. Here and there, they passed a solitary cabin with unkempt children playing about it, and dogs that grew hysterical over the automobile. Occasionally a wood-cutter stopped to stare

after them. As they went deeper and deeper into the barrens the character of the woods changed. The dwarfish trees gave place to stately yellow pines and tall cedar-trees, and here and there a sweet-gum. The air grew odorous with woodsy perfumes; sweet-fern and pine-needles, and now and then was added the cool damp smell of wet earth as they crossed some narrow stream of dark topaz cedar-water, slipping silently between banks of moss and the yellow spotted leaves of dog-tooth violets, and under spreading clumps of budding alder and swamp magnolia. Once or twice they spied among the dead leaves and pine-needles a patch of delicate, fragrant pink, and the girls had to climb out of the car to gather more arbutus for Mrs. Matthews.

"What a queer, mysterious green light hangs over everything here in the woods," observed Polly as she came back to the car after one of these excursions, both hands full of arbutus blossoms. "I feel as though I ought to see some little gnome peering out at me from behind a tree."

Bunnie looked bored. "I'll be glad when

we get to Princeton," she confided in a whisper to Margery. "It isn't a bit exciting with just Dick and Sam—and I'm tired to death of these old woods."

As they started on their way again, Mrs. Jameson looked at her wrist watch. "Beautiful as all this is," she said, "I feel a little uneasy. I 'smell thunder in the air,' as Missouri says. Are you sure, Sam, that you took the right turn at the crossroads? Let me see the map."

Dick handed back the map which he and Sam had spread on their knees and were studying from time to time, and Mrs. Jameson bent over it as the car trundled slowly along. "Sam," she said at last, "we *have* made the wrong turn—we'll have to go back, I'm afraid. Suppose that we hurry as much as we can. If a storm should come we really ought to be in Fenton before it breaks."

They had arranged to spend the night at the comfortable little country hotel in the small town of Fenton.

"All right, Mrs. Jameson,—just as soon as we come to a wide enough place to turn. It's too narrow here, and the trees are too close."

The road grew rougher and Sam bumped the car along slowly that the jar over the rough places might not be too severe. The place where he could turn seemed to be always beyond the next bend in the road. Rather tired and drowsy from the long ride in the fresh air, the girls grew quieter, and no one had much to say.

"What's that knocking, Sam?" exclaimed Polly, suddenly. "Is anything wrong with the engine?"

"No—I'm just running slowly because of the tree-roots. Hope the road is better soon. Thank goodness—there's a place ahead of us where we can turn! See—there's a road, there, crossing ours."

They reached the crossroads and Sam backed and turned, but in turning swung the car too far over into a sand-pocket. The car made several gallant but ineffectual efforts to run through it, then, with a sigh like a tired dog, stopped.

"Anybody off?" called out Bunnie.

"'All ashore that's goin' ashore,'" laughed Esther.

"Toot! Toot! All aboard!" urged Polly.

"Engine's stopped," observed Sam to Dick, paying no attention to the girls behind him. "I'll have to start her up again and back out."

"Zr-zr-zr," remarked the engine, refusing to be electrically self-started.

"Pity this isn't a horse," observed Dick after Sam had tried everything that he had ever seen any one do in similar circumstances and some he had not.

"The batteries aren't working right," snapped Sam in answer.

"I'm afraid there's something wrong with the engine," said Polly. "I didn't like the way it was knocking a little while ago."

"Is there anything wrong, Sam?" asked Mrs. Jameson.

Sam took off his cap and rubbed his forehead. "Why, there seems to be something wrong with the self-starter, Mrs. Jameson," he answered. "I'll have to get out and crank her."

He got out, and searched through the tool-box. "Crank handle isn't here. I'm sorry, Mrs. Jameson, I'll have to look under that back seat."

Mrs. Jameson and the girls piled out of the

car while Sam searched for the missing handle. "Where do you keep the thing, Polly?" asked Dick.

"I don't know—I've never seen Father or William have to use it."

"Here it is," exclaimed Sam. "Crazy place to keep it," he muttered to Dick. "It was in one of the side-pockets there."

Dick took the handle and cranked away manfully; cranked until his face showed purple under the tan and the veins stood out on his forehead.

Polly and the girls wandered up the road and fell to picking spice-bark twigs. "We don't know where we're going, but we're on the way," hummed Margery impersonally, biting a neat little round of bark off her twig.

Sam took his turn at the crank handle. "Engine won't turn over," he groaned at last. "She's on a dead center, someway or other."

Dick stood thinking, his head on one side. "We had better push the car out of the sand," he said in his decided, practical manner. "Perhaps we can get things going that way."

Sam and Dick put their shoulders to the

wheels and pushed, but the car was big and heavy.

"What's going on there?" asked Polly of Margery, straightening up from a new variety of wild-flower she had been inspecting.

"It's moving day," laughed Margery.

"Come on," cried Polly, hurrying toward the boys. "Our lily white paws," holding up a pair of brown and muscular little hands, "will have to help."

Laughing, the girls put their young strength against the car, and slowly and elephantinely it rolled back into the road.

"Now then," said Dick, "try to crank."

Again, Sam tried everything known to his inexperience, without avail. Finally, the boys solemnly pushed the car down the road in the forlorn hope of starting the engine.

"No use," said Sam at last. "Something's wrong."

The breeze that had been rustling the tasselated tips of the pine-trees grew stronger, and whirled Dick's cap from off his head. "Wish the old car was a horse," he declared again, as he caught his cap and jammed it back.

Polly sat down on the running-board. "I'm feeling somewhat like the babes in the wood," she sighed.

"And a storm coming on, too," added Esther. "See how dark it is."

"That's just because we are in the woods," consoled Sam.

"Yes—but hear the wind in the trees! That has a real, stormy sound."

Mrs. Jameson was plainly worried, although she made a brave attempt to hide it. "I'm glad that we have you two strong boys with us," she said cheerfully. "But what shall we do?—We can't stay here all night."

"Get out the road map, Dick," suggested Bunnie, "and see how near we are to anything. I hope we shan't have to walk far. It was miles back that we passed a cottage."

"Anyway," said Dick, "I think we must be near to the edge of the barrens—see how much smaller these trees are than they were a while back."

"Perhaps it won't rain after all," suggested Margery hopefully.

"Oh!" cried Polly. "Here comes somebody! I hear wheels rattling!"

Dick jumped to his feet. "Sure enough!" he exclaimed.

Down the crossroad came a rickety old cart with a snub-nosed boy of about sixteen perched on its high seat driving the heavy plow horse.

"Hello! Ye're in a fix," he grinned, as hailing him Sam explained their predicament. "Them there automobiles has their disadvantages, ain't they?" he gloated. "Yes, yer ain't so very far from the pike that runs into Fenton—yer chose a good place fer yer breakdown. Yes, there's a place yer can telephone from. Right down there a piece—where this road crosses the pike, there's old Dutch Hans. He's what they call a Swiss, or an Eyetalian, and he runs a bakery. Bakes his things—and they're prime, too—an' sends 'em over to Fenton. He's got an ice-cream parlor an' a telephone."

"Thank goodness!" sighed Mrs. Jameson. "It's just a little farther on, you say? Come on, girls, we had better hurry! We'll telephone to a garage in Fenton and get them to send out a car for us and a mechanic to see what is the matter with this one."

The boy on the cart gathered up the reins. "I fergot to tell yer—old Hans ain't all there in his intellect. But he's harmless. He just thinks his girl, that was comin' out from Switzerland thirty years ago ter marry him an' that got drowneded on the way, is alive an' comin' ter-morrow. An' he's always a-gettin' ready fer her, an' talkin' about her. He says to Ma last week—he stopped at our house fer a glass of water—he says 'Mine Hedwig' (that was her name; ain't it funny?) 'she vill be here ter-morrow.' An' Ma never let on she knowed she was dead, nor nothin', an' just says pert as you please, 'Do tell, Hans, won't that be nice fer you!' He'll show you the furniture he's carved for her—an' tell you she's comin' ter-morrow, but don't you care."

Mrs. Jameson, not interested in the boy's gossip, and her mind bent on seeing that the curtains of the car be pulled down carefully to keep out the approaching storm, and that the dress-suit cases be unloaded for fear of their being stolen, paid no attention to him. But Polly and Margery would have lingered to ask him more questions.

"Hans ain't never hurt anybody that I ever

heard tell of—he's real harmless," he concluded as he rattled away.

"Isn't it exciting?" whispered Polly, as she clutched Margery's hand and they hurried together along the slippery pine-needle strewn path.

It grew darker and darker and the wind whipped the trees and bushes menacingly.

"Hurry, children, hurry," urged Mrs. Jameson. "The storm is coming soon."

"Who would expect a thunder-storm in April?" said Dick as he stumbled over the roots of a tree.

"Cheer up, Mrs. Jameson," consoled Esther, who had hurried on ahead. "I see a light."

"Here's the end of the woods just ahead," reported Dick. "I can see a clearing and a turnpike."

The woods stopped and the road ran through a peach orchard. At the end of the orchard was a little old house, its wide clapboards weather-beaten to a silver gray. A vegetable garden with a small, windowless log cabin in its midst, stretched to its left; to the right the forest approached. Careful

hands had transplanted wild-flowers from the woods and fields to a patch of garden before the front door and whitewashed the clam-shells outlining the walk and the flower-beds. A small neat sign by the gate announced "Johann Hess, Baker. Soft drinks for sale."

Margery paused and looked at the little gray house with garden, and at the woods, sombre now, beside it. "Polly," she said, "doesn't it remind you of the little house in the woods that Hansel and Gretel found?"

"Sh-sh," whispered Polly, with mock caution. "A witch owned that house—and she was a baker, too. Don't you remember how she heated up the big oven and was going to roast the children? Oh, I hope 'old Hans' talks about his girl that was drowned. Isn't it terribly romantic?"

Mrs. Jameson was less interested in the romance of the occasion than she was in the fact that the trees were wildly tossing about them and that the rain was beginning to fall. "I do hope that the old man is home," she gasped, hurrying up the front path.

As though to reassure them, the sound of a violin came faintly from within.

Dick put down the dress-suit case he was carrying. "It's all right, Mrs. Jameson."

The violin stopped; there was the sound of approaching footsteps, and the door was thrown open. A tall old man, with a powerful frame, and a gentle, childlike face, stood before them holding a lamp.

"Good-even-ing," he smiled.

"Have you a telephone we may use?" asked Mrs. Jameson. "Our car has broken down and I should like to telephone to the garage in Fenton."

The old man smiled again, and held the door open. "I shall have glad to haf you use the 'phone," he said politely. "Vill you not enter? I am sorry there is no hostess to velcome you—to-morrow mine Hedwig vill be here—but to-day I am alone."

Margery clutched Polly's hand and squeezed it rapturously.

CHAPTER X

HEDWIG'S HOME

THE front door opened directly into a parlor, where the old man motioned the others to seat themselves, while he took Mrs. Jameson into the room beyond to telephone. Margery looked about her with interest. The parlor showed that it was very old; the floor of wide worn boards sagged from the fireplace at the rear to the low, narrow windows of many panes at the front, and the low ceiling seemed to be on top of her head. There was little furniture in the room save an old settle, painted gray and stenciled across the back with a basket of fruit and flowers, and a couple of rush-bottomed chairs. In the center of the floor stood a curiously and beautifully carved table with a bowl of arbutus on its top. Through the partly open door they could see into the room in which was the telephone, and which seemed to be a sort of office and ice-

cream parlor, with rows of shelves holding bottles of sarsaparilla and ginger ale.

"Dick," Margery whispered, "isn't it rather spooky?"

Dick laughed. "Oh, you find lots of queer little places like this scattered through the country."

There was a flash of lightning, and a few seconds later a crash of thunder. Margery clapped her hands over her ears, while Dick sauntered to the open window and looked out. "It's coming down in buckets," he observed. "Come here and see."

"Dick, do come away from that window," protested Margery, as another vivid flash of lightning illumined the room. "It's dangerous."

"Oh, the storm isn't near," answered Dick easily. "Count your pulse beats between the flash and the thunder and then you can tell how many miles away the lightning is."

Mrs. Jameson came back from telephoning, considerably relieved. "I found a garage, and they'll send a car out for us as soon as the storm slacks up a little. And a man to look over our car—we can tow it in if

necessary. Dick, have you the tea-basket there?"

Dick picked up the basket from the pile of luggage by the door. "Some day I'm going to invent a tea-basket that won't weigh a ton," he said, "and then they'll give me a tablet in the hall of fame."

"A full-length statue, you mean, with your highness in the act of conversing in the deaf and dumb language," put in Polly wickedly.

Dick grinned good-naturedly. He had long ago ceased to be sensitive over the time he and Sam had attempted to fool a car-load of people and had the joke turned back on themselves. "Shall I unpack this?" he said imperturbably, turning to Mrs. Jameson.

"May we spread it out on one of the tables there in the other room?" she asked, turning to the old man, who was standing, an interested onlooker, in the doorway. "And have you any cakes—or ginger ale for sale that we might have?"

The old man smiled again, the gentle, guileless smile with which he had greeted them. "I haf tea-buns and ginger ale, if you vould like them—an' I can mak' you some coffee. I

haf sorry that I haf not more to offer you—but I am sold out for the day. To-morrow mine Hedwig vill be here, an' den I vill haf more. I do not haf ice-cream until the summer time he comes—den ve haf so many automobile parties stoppin' here—I mak' lots of money. Vould not de young ladies like to come de stairs up? There they can their faces vash and themselves rest."

The girls glanced at each other; they were dusty from their long ride. "My face is perfectly clean," declared Esther, "but a little water wouldn't hurt Polly's."

They picked up their dress-suit cases and lamp in hand old Hans led the way through the office to a narrow boxed-in staircase. On the second floor were two small bedrooms, and one large one containing a great, carved four-post bed.

"What beautiful furniture," exclaimed Mrs. Jameson.

"You like the carvin', hein?" and old Hans ran his hand lovingly down one of the carved posts. "I have it myself carved. I learned to carve vhen I a boy in Switzerland was. I haf all this done for mine Hedwig—

she is to-morrow coming." He paused and gazed thoughtfully at the girls. "She is pretty, mine Hedwig, with golden hair like this young lady here," and he laid a finger softly on Margery's curls. "Now I must the cakes for your supper get. There is fresh water here," pointing to the ewer on the wash-stand, beautifully carved to match the bed.

He disappeared down the stairs, and the girls opened their dress-suit cases and took out hair-brushes and whisks. "Well, anyway, Margery," laughed Polly, as she stuck her face into the basin of cool, fresh spring water, "the witch has behaved pretty well so far."

"Isn't it thrilling?" said Margery. "I think he's terribly romantic."

"That old man romantic?" said Bunnie, with a shrug of her shoulders. "That isn't *my* idea of romance!"

Bunnie moved aside from the mirror where she had been powdering her nose, and Polly took her place. "I'm afraid Bunnie is awfully bored," she said softly to Margery.

"Never mind," Margery whispered back.

"We'll be at Princeton to-morrow, and she'll enjoy that."

"I hope Jimmy Matthews and the boys there make a fuss over her," sighed Polly. "Otherwise I'm afraid she will find the whole trip awfully dull."

Refreshed, the girls blew out the lamp, and stumbled down the steep box-stairs, ready for supper.

Sam and Dick had unpacked the tea-basket and spread out the contents on a couple of the small tables in the office which had been pushed close together. Old Hans hovered about, greatly interested. His face lighted up as the girls exclaimed over the plate of tea-buns and the ginger ale he placed on the table, and he hurried off to make some coffee for those who wanted it. Outside the thunder roared and the rain fell in torrents, but it was unable to quench the gay spirits of the young people within. Nor was their gayety decreased by the interest old Hans took in Margery.

"You certainly seem to have made a hit, Margie," laughed Sam as they rose from the table and went back to the parlor where a lamp had been lighted for them.

"Did you ever see such a deluge!" remarked Dick, going to the window. "We won't be able to start soon at this rate."

"Aweel, my young friend," answered Polly, "patience is a splendid virtue for you to cultivate."

"How about yourself?"

"Would you gild the lily or perfume refined gold," quoted Polly, glibly if inaccurately. "I am already perfection."

"Especially your modesty, my dear," laughed her mother. "I wish it would stop raining. What a queer eerie place this is," she added with a little nervous shudder. "It is positively uncanny to hear that old man always talking about his Hedwig—and to think that the poor girl has been dead this thirty years."

"Oh, never mind, Mother," consoled Polly; "he's perfectly harmless. Besides, we have two brawny boys with us. I think it's perfectly dear and romantic of him—don't you, Sam?"

Sam was intensely sentimental at heart, although he would not have admitted it for worlds. Now he shuffled his feet uneasily,

and clearing his throat tried to utter something sprightly.

The wind sent a spatter of rain violently against the window pane and banged a shutter noisily.

"Well, I suppose if the worst comes to the worst," went on Mrs. Jameson, "we can spend the night here. But I think that I'll try telephoning again."

"I can't get any answer from central," she said, coming back from the office a few minutes later. "Evidently the storm has put the wires out of order. It's only half-past seven, fortunately."

"It's slackening already," said Esther, who was sitting by the window. "I believe that it is going to stop raining pretty soon. That downpour was just a final spurt. But don't let's sit here like mournful mummies. Let's play something, if it is only 'I love my love with an A.'"

"I love my love with an A, because she is aquatic, and I became acquainted with her in an automobile in April," rattled off Bunnie.

"That's too high-brow for me," objected Sam. "Can't we do something else?"

"If somebody will run up-stairs to the bag I left there," said Mrs. Jameson, "he will find a package. I took the precaution to bring several games."

"I'll go," volunteered Margery. "I want to get my sweater, anyway."

"Can you find your way in the dark?" asked Polly.

"Yes, Grandmamma. There's a little lamp here in the office—do you suppose that Hans will do anything to me if I dare to take it?"

"Ask him if you may."

"He isn't there." Margery disappeared and the others went on talking.

"Just think, summer will be here before we know it," commented Esther. "Thunder-storms already."

"Where are you going this summer, Polly?" asked Sam.

"We don't know yet. I wish we could all go away somewhere together. I wonder how long Margery is going to stay after her father and mother come."

Suddenly above the patter of the rain falling from the eaves, and the sough of the

wind in the wet trees there was the crash of something falling.

"Wh-what was that?" exclaimed Mrs. Jameson.

"Just a shutter blown off," reassured Dick.

"Mr. and Mrs. Morris are coming some time early in June, aren't they?" went on Esther. "I hope they won't go right back. It would be such fun to have Margery here for part of the summer."

"I wish she would hustle up with those games now," suggested Sam.

"Let's sing something," suggested Polly. "Strike up, Sam,—you're next best to Margery at leading."

"Three blind mice," sang Sam, obediently.

"Three blind mice," Dick took it up.

"Three blind mice," warbled the others.

"I wonder why Margery doesn't come," said Polly, after they had finally settled the fate of the three afflicted rodents.

"Perhaps she can't find the right bag," suggested Mrs. Jameson. "Call to her, dear."

Polly went to the foot of the stairs, calling "Margery!" There was no answer. "Margery Daw," she called again; then, "Peggy!"

Still no answer. "Peggy-wegs," she cried; louder, this time.

"It doesn't make any difference what name you call her," laughed Esther. "Margery's like the Tar-baby and 'jes' keeps on a-sayin' nothin'.'"

"'Miss Kate Penoyah! Miss Kate Penoyah!'" warbled Sam, twanking an imaginary guitar. "'My love for you will never, never die!'"

"'Young man below dah!'" Polly and Esther chanted together the immortal answer. "'Young man below dah! Miss Kate Penoyah lives foh doahs below, sah!'"

"Polly," ordered Polly's mother, "run up-stairs and see what is the matter with Margery."

"Yes, Mother. Dick," Polly called back from the stairs a moment later, "it's all dark up there. Won't you bring me some matches?"

Dick picked up a box of matches from the parlor table. "Don't you want me to go up with you?" he asked, taking them out to Polly. "Girls are always afraid of the dark."

"Thank you, Mr. Ball, I don't want you

after that remark," and with a flounce of pretended indignation Polly disappeared up the stairs.

Dick chuckled and went back to the others.

Bunnie, who added palmistry to her other accomplishments, was reading Sam's hand, and Dick leaned over her chair to watch the performance. "Promise him wealth and fame," he recommended, "and long life and happiness. Any gypsy can do that for a quarter."

"A Roumanian gypsy came to our house one day and wanted to tell our fortunes," said Mrs. Jameson. "She was a pretty little creature, with henna-dyed hair, and a chain of gold coins across her forehead, so we told her to go ahead and try. She asked for a glass of water, which she stood in the middle of the table. Then she told us to make a wish. 'Now,' she said, passing her hand over the top of the glass, 'if the water boils, your wish will come true.' And immediately, the water *did* boil! She must have had some kind of chemical concealed in the palm of her hand and dropped it into the glass—she was very deft, for we could see nothing and——"

Polly quietly entered the room, and closing the door behind her, leaned against it.

"Something—something dreadful has happened!" she gasped.

Dick sprang up. "*What?*"

"Margery! Margery's gone! And—and—the room is all upset—and—and ——!" She held out a small, blood-stained handkerchief.

CHAPTER XI

OLD HANS

"POLLY—tell me what you mean," commanded Mrs. Jameson, her voice sharp with anxiety. "Try to tell me what you mean!"

"It's just this, Mother—the room where we left the bags is all in confusion. Oh, it's dreadful! And, oh, Mother!—Margery wasn't there—and I couldn't find her! And the lamp is all broken on the floor—and your bag is upset—and everything spilled out—and I lighted the matches and looked for her—and I couldn't find her! And, Mother," her voice dropped to a hoarse whisper and she held out the handkerchief again, limply, "I found this by the wash-stand—one of those funny, tiny little ones of hers with the colored monogram. Oh, what do you suppose has happened to her?"

Mrs. Jameson leaned back in her chair, ghastly white and trembling. "Dick," she murmured appealingly.

Dick took command of the situation. "Perhaps Margery has fainted or something, and struck her head—you only lighted matches, you say, Polly. I'll go and look."

He started to open the door; Bunnie grasped his coat and held him back with cousinly solicitude. "Dick, Dick," she implored, "don't go up alone—and see what old Hans is doing, first."

They looked at each other. Bunnie's words had suggested a new and disquieting idea. "He did keep saying Margery was like his 'Hedwig,'" muttered Sam. "Here, Dick, I'll go up with you. Sorry to take your light, Mrs. Jameson, but we may need it." He picked up the lamp from the carved center table, and they started toward the stairway.

"I'll go, too," volunteered Polly.

"If only I had never undertaken this dreadful trip," groaned Mrs. Jameson. Bunnie and Esther made no answer and the three sat clasping hands on the settle. Finally, Bunnie rose and opening the front door, peered out into the wet, silent darkness. "Oh, dear," she sighed, and went back to her place beside Esther.

Up-stairs Polly and the boys were surveying with consternation the disorder and confusion disclosed by the lighted lamp. At their feet lay a small upturned candle-stand and a broken lamp; Mrs. Jameson's bag was on its side and its contents were spilled out over the room; and one of the curtains of the big bed dragged on the floor, torn from its support.

Dick opened the door of the built-in cupboard in the corner. "Nothing here," he reported.

"We'd better look through the other rooms," suggested Sam.

The two other rooms were small and sparsely furnished, and it did not take long to search them. On the bureau in the room which was evidently used by old Hans stood a small faded tintype of a young girl in a picturesque peasant costume.

"She does look something like Margery," murmured Polly with quivering lips. "Oh, Dick—do you suppose seeing her made—him go crazier?"

Dick patted her sympathetically, if clumsily, on the shoulder. "Brace up, brace up," he choked. "Perhaps it will be all right,

after all. We'd better go down-stairs and see if she's there,—and see if old Hans is about."

There was no trace of Margery or Hans in the office, or in the small kitchen with a two-burner oil stove, behind it.

Dick squared his shoulders. "We'll have to search outside," he said through tightened lips. "Come on, Sam."

"I'll take this lamp back to the others first. I've an extra box of matches in my pocket —we can use those."

The rain had ceased and the moon was struggling through the heavy masses of flying clouds. Now and then there was a fitful flash of lightning which illuminated the wet woods beside the house. The wind rustled the tops of the tall trees, and occasionally there came the low distant rumble of thunder. Beyond that there was no sound. Polly paused at the beginning of the path leading from the little flower-garden into the woods.

"Margery! Margery!" she called softly. Her voice struck the massed tree-trunks and echoed back, faintly and derisively, "'ery! 'ery!"

"Here, Sam," directed Dick, "you take

Polly with you and search along the roadway —I'm going deeper into the woods. Have you your matches all right?"

He hurried down the path and disappeared in the darkness. Now and then came the faint gleam of a lighted match.

Sam pushed open the little gate and he and Polly made their way down the turnpike past the strip of woodland jutting upon it. All was silent and empty. At intervals a whip-poor-will, that shyest of birds, lover of night and dense thickets, would send forth its weird, plaintive call, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!" Polly, stumbling along the dark road behind Sam, felt as though an iron band were around her throat, and the tears rolled unheeded down her cheeks.

"We'd better go back—and look up along the other road—the one we came by," whispered Sam, jerkily.

"Whip-poor-will!" came from the tree above; startled Polly clutched at Sam, and her tears came faster.

They turned back and passed the house, where Bunnie stood, tense and watchful, in the doorway. "Have you heard anything?"

she called softly, as the light from the room behind her fell upon them.

"Nothing," said Sam, wearily.

"I wish Dick would come," Polly murmured. "It's not safe—his going alone in the woods that way."

Sam stopped and gave the first few notes of the whistle he and Dick had used as a signal between them for years.

Faintly, but clearly, the answer came back.

"*He's* all right, at any rate." Sam took Polly by the arm and they turned up the narrow sandy road by which they had reached the home of old Hans, somewhat over an hour earlier.

"Oh, Sam—what do you suppose can have happened to her?"

Sam made no answer.

Suddenly he stopped. "Polly! Look!"

"What? Where? I can't see anything."

"Look! See that little gleam of light over there?"

"Yes, it's Dick lighting matches."

"No, it isn't. It's stationary."

Polly shook her head mournfully. "I don't believe it's anything, Sam," she gulped.

"It's just a tiny ray of light—but, we'll go and see. We'll have to go back, and around the house to get to it."

Sam lighted another match and they stumbled along for a few yards in its flickering light. The match burned to the end and went out. There was a rustle in the bushes beside them, and something scurried across the road. Polly gave a stifled scream. Sam's overwrought nerves found relief in irritation.

"Oh, brace up, Polly! It's only a rabbit!"

They reached the house again; Bunnie had closed the door, and there was only the faint light from the windows to guide them. Sam stood still and considered.

"I say, Polly, do you remember that queer little log cabin in the vegetable garden? I remember noticing it this afternoon when we came."

"No," said Polly. "Oh, yes,—I do remember it!"

"I think that gleam of light comes from there."

Polly took an eager step forward, and walked into a tall bush, the wet twigs of which slapped her in the face. "Oh, Sam," she said miserably, "do light another match."

"Here, hold on to my sleeve," ordered Sam. "I can feel my way by the clam-shells along the path."

Dick's whistle came from the woods, and Sam paused to answer it. "I guess he's coming," he said. "See, Polly, see that tiny gleam of light—I'm sure that comes from the cabin."

They crept forward, Sam feeling his way by the clam-shells outlining the walk, and sensibly saving the few matches left in the box. Beyond them, before long, they could see the dim outlines of a building.

"The light does come from there," whispered Sam.

"Whip-poor-will," sang the hidden, mysterious bird of the night. As if some wild, perverted echo to its melancholy cry, came, gay, impudent, rollicking, the sound of a violin.

"Sam!"

Sam stood still and listened. "It comes from the little log house," he muttered. "Polly!"

"Ron, ron, ron! Petit pataplon! Il etait une bergere."

Deserting Polly, Sam began to run in the direction of the dimly outlined building, falling into bushes as he went. Polly stood still, a big round tear rolling down her cheek. "It's Margery's voice," she said aloud. Catching her breath with another long sob, she too ran in the direction from whence came the music. She caught up with Sam, and together they fell against the door and pushed it open. Breathless, and half-stunned with relief, they stood blinking at the light.

Perched on a big table in the middle of the room sat Margery, one eye hidden under a wide, white bandage that encircled her head and finished in two great rabbit-ears in the back. Across the narrow cabin, old Hans, fiddle in hand, sat on a flour barrel.

Margery turned toward the pair in the doorway, startled at their agitated appearance. "Wh-what's the m-matter?" she gasped.

"We've been looking—for—you everywhere," panted Polly in answer.

"Were you?" asked Margery innocently. "Why didn't you call me?"

Sam advanced menacingly toward old Hans.

"What did you mean by keeping her?" he demanded.

Hans turned wide, faded, blue eyes upon him. "I understand not," he answered slowly. "You want the young lady—yes? The young lady was hurt."

"Hurt?" cried Polly, shaking off the spell that seemed to have clutched her, and running forward to throw her arms around Margery. "Oh, Margery, dear—has he hurt you—your head?"

Margery shook off Polly's arm a trifle impatiently. "What *is* the matter with you two? Yes, I banged my eye against that old bed and cut my forehead. I'll be a nice sight to go to Princeton to-morrow—with a black eye like this. Oh, Polly, wouldn't you just know some crazy thing would happen to me—it always does!"

Polly and Sam turned amazed faces toward her. "Banged your eye?" they said together.

"Yes, Hans has been getting some hot water for it." Margery dipped a fresh pad of linen in a bowl of water standing on the table beside her, and raising the bandage

over her eye, slipped it deftly in place. "Hot water was the thing to use, I know—that's what Papa did when a golf-ball struck him in the eye—so I went down and asked Hans to get me some." She turned and smiled at the old man sitting silently on the flour-barrel, "and he very kindly came right down here to the bakery and got some."

Polly and Sam looked at each other. "Tell the others," Polly said faintly, waving her arm feebly toward the door, and then as Sam started toward the main house, she burst into hysterical shrieks of laughter.

Margery stared at her in astonishment. "What is the joke?" she demanded. Polly continued to laugh. "Polly—stop it," Margery ordered sternly, at last.

Polly buried her face in her hands. "You look so funny," she gasped. "Oh, Margery! —don't—don't—you make me worse. You look so funny when you try to be dignified with that crazy bandage sticking out in rabbit-ears behind your head. But, Margery," she whispered, glancing over her shoulder at the old man placidly tuning his violin, "the room—how did it get so upset? We found

the chair and the lamp broken on the floor—and your handkerchief—I found it—blood-stained!" She dropped her voice still lower. "We—we thought you had been murdered."

Margery gave a little shriek and turned pale at the thought. "Polly! Why, I never dreamed of such a thing! Do you suppose that I would have done a crazy thing like that? I—I," she whispered, as Hans looked up, "I blew out the lamp and started down-stairs—and then—I couldn't find the door. I thought that it was awfully funny at first, and giggled and giggled to myself—and then after while I began to get scared. The room was so dark and so still—and I fancied that I could hear some one breathing—I just imagined it, of course. And then, suddenly—crash—I hit my head against the bedpost! It hurt terribly, and my forehead bled where I had cut it against the carving—see," and she lifted the bandage, disclosing a discolored eye, and a slight cut above her eyebrow. "That made me feel faint and sick. Then I started to call for help—but just as I started—I knocked into the chair and upset a lamp or something—I smelled kerosene. At that

moment a brighter flash of lightning came—and I saw the door. Of course, it was dark in a moment—but I managed to make my way out. Then," more cheerfully, "I came down-stairs and asked Hans to get me some hot water—for I knew that was the best thing for my eye. You were all singing, 'three blind mice' when I came down the stairs."

"But why didn't you come to us?"

"Oh, because I knew that I looked such a sight, with the cut in my forehead, and my eye all bunged up—and—and my nose was bleeding, too. Besides, I just felt so miserable and forlorn that all I wanted to do was to get some water on my eye. Besides, Bunnie and everybody would have laughed at me."

"Why did you come out here?" asked Polly.

"Because there was no water heated in the house, Hans said, but there is a funny reservoir sort of thing in the stove there—see, at that end—where you can always get hot water. And Hans was really awfully nice."

Hans got up and, going to the stove, lifted the lid from the reservoir at the end. With

a swing of one long arm he reached for the bowl on the table beside Margery, and carefully refilled it. "That is it," he said with his curious childlike smile, as Margery dipped her linen pad in the hot water; "that will your eye do good. You will again sing?" He drew his bow across the strings of his violin, and Margery, with an apologetic smile at Polly, sang again the little nursery song she had been singing when Sam and Polly found her, "Ron! Ron! Ron! Petit pataplon!"

There was the sound of footsteps outside and Sam appeared. Behind him was Dick, his clothes wet and muddy, but his face shining with relief. "Well, Margery," he began, "you've given us a peach of a scare—what made you act like this?"

"Like what?" demanded Margery, somewhat excitedly.

Dick quietly looked about the cabin, noting the big, brick oven on one side, and the large range. "This your bakery?" he asked Hans.

Hans nodded and smiled. "Here I do the baking—mine things are good—it is because I have such good ovens, and the skill. Here

I keep the fire going in my range always. When the young lady wanted water for her eye, I say 'come to the bakery.'"

"Oh—oh, yes. The automobile has come, and I think Mrs. Jameson would like to see you at the house."

Hans picked up his lantern and led the way toward the house. As they left the cabin, Dick drew Margery aside. "What made you come off this way, Margery?" he asked somewhat sternly, as though he had been the cousin they both had once thought him to be. "You gave us a fright."

From behind them Polly's voice protested. "Oh, don't tease her, Dick. She lost her way in the room and banged her forehead—I'll tell you all about it some other time."

Dick took the hint and asked no more questions about Margery's adventures beyond, "But why did you stay out there so long talking to that old codger?"

Margery hung her head and was silent.

There was considerable excitement at the house; the automobile had come from the garage just after Sam had burst in on Mrs. Jameson with his joyful news, and she and

Bunnie and Esther were hastily restrapping dress-suit cases, and trying to compose their harassed nerves and emotions, while Sam accompanied the men up the road after the abandoned car. The questions thrown at Margery in the midst of the hubbub were too incoherent for her to attempt to answer them, and not until they were all tucked away in the big touring car sent from the garage, with their own machine following at the end of a stout rope, was she able to tell exactly how it all happened.

Margery did not relish the rain of comments, half amused, half irritated, showered upon her, and she was grateful to Dick when he began a story of his adventures and wanderings in the dark underbrush of the woods looking for her. As she thought of the worry and distress of which she had been the cause, she felt that it would be adding insult to injury to confess that she had lingered in the bakehouse talking to old Hans because here had seemed an opportunity to be a mascot. The old man had been so pathetically eager to talk about his Hedwig, so anxious to play for Margery, and so delighted to find that she

sang some of the simple songs which he knew that she had felt her presence to be a boon to him. It had not occurred to her that at the same time she might be bringing anxiety to others.

"I wish," she thought ruefully as they bumped over the rough cobblestones of the little town of Fenton, "that I had thought about the others, too. Oh, dear, there is such a lot to think about in being a mascot."

They were all too tired and sleepy to do much talking when they reached the little country hotel where they were to spend the night. Esther and Margery shared a room together; yawning and nodding they hastily unpacked and tumbled into bed in the quickest time possible.

"Do you know," murmured Margery sleepily as her head touched the pillow, "I believe that I'll go out of the mascoting business."

"What?" asked Esther, pausing with a shoe in her hand.

But Margery only answered by a long, sleepy sigh and turned over, dragging the bedcovers with her.

CHAPTER XII

PRINCETON

ESTHER sat up in bed the next morning and tossing her pigtails over her shoulders turned to look at Margery.

"Oh," she shrieked, "Margery! You poor child."

Margery opened a pair of sleepy eyes. "What's the matter?" she asked.

"Your nose and your eye—they're dreadful."

With an answering shriek, Margery bounded out of bed to the looking-glass, only to fall back despairingly. "Esther," she almost wept, "did you ever see anything so horrible? My face felt rather queer in the night—once or twice I half woke up—but I went right to sleep again; I was so tired, you know. But I never dreamed that I'd look like this! What shall I do?"

Esther got up to investigate. "Oh, it isn't so bad," she comforted, tenderly feeling Margery's nose. "Your nose isn't broken—and it really isn't so awfully much swollen." At that Margery mustered courage to take another peep at herself in the glass. "It's just that you have such a pretty nose that every bit of swelling shows. Your cheek is rather discolored around your eye—but I'll lend you my chiffon veil. It's a heavy one, and people won't be able to see through it. Isn't it lucky I brought it!"

There was a chorus of consternation mingled with laughter when Margery appeared at the breakfast table, but as nothing seemed to be seriously amiss, they dropped the subject of her mishap and turned to the weather.

The day had dawned bright and clear after the thunder-storm, and as the car was found to be only slightly out of order they had hopes of getting under way by ten o'clock.

"There's a package for whichever one of you young ladies is named Miss Margery," said the clerk at the desk, as the young people started out for a stroll to fill in the time before the car was ready.

"Why, my name is Margery," exclaimed Margery, surprised. "What can it be?"

The clerk handed out a large square box. "Old Hans Hess, the baker, brought it this morning before you all were up."

"Perhaps Mother ordered some cakes," suggested Polly. "She paid him, I know, for the damage we did—but perhaps she thought she ought to do more."

"Let's open it, anyway," proposed Sam.

"It is addressed to me," said Margery, as she unfastened the cover. "See—it has to 'Miss Margery'—and then a dash, as though he didn't know my last name. Oh!" Inside the box were two rows of little spice-cakes, each delicately iced and with half a walnut sitting on top. "Oh, here's a note," she cried. "Just listen to this—'For the young lady who was kind, and with me talked and sang.' Oh, isn't it interesting!—see what a queer, cramped handwriting."

The clerk joined in the conversation. "Did you let old Hans talk about his girl that was drowned? He's dotty in his head, and people are real mean about teasing him. My wife lets him talk about his 'Hedwig' to her

sometimes, and he's right grateful. I declare, it's real pathetic. He's a fine baker, too, and I guess he's made a lot of money."

Margery put the cover back on the box somewhat pensively. She had given pleasure to old Hans, and he was grateful; yet at the same time she had brought distress to Mrs. Jameson and the others. Being a mascot, she concluded, was bewildering and complex.

Buying picture post-cards to send back to friends and relatives in Renwyck's Town, and to old Hans, furnished an object for the stroll. Margery, trailing along with Polly and Esther and Dick, found that the light made her eye feel uncomfortable, and that her head ached from the blow she had given it the night before. A peep in a shop-window revealed, also, that not even Esther's heavy blue veil had been able to disguise the disfigurement. With a pang of envy, she watched Bunnie, walking ahead with Sam. The visit to Princeton, looming on the horizon for the afternoon, and the fact that she had monopolized the society of Sam, seemed to have raised Bunnie's spirits and she was vivacity itself. She looked very pretty and charming

in spite of the fact that she had coiled up her dark hair in entirely too elaborate a fashion for a schoolgirl, and completely disguised her delicate complexion with a mask of powder. Her laugh, too, was too loud and her voice too shrill.

As they stepped into the little shop where post-cards were sold, Margery overheard Dick say with cousinly frankness, "Oh, cut it out, Bunnie! Why don't you act like the other girls? And what's the use of having your hair frizzled up like that, and of looking as though you had fallen head foremost into the flour-barrel?"

Bunnie laughed and tossed her head, but made no answer.

When they stopped at a wayside hotel for luncheon, Margery took another survey of her battered features. Alas, they looked even worse than they had in the morning, for the eye was turning a deeper purple and riding in the brisk wind had increased the swelling of her nose. Margery, innocently proud of her looks, bit her lips to hide their quivering. "I wonder why it is that things always happen to me," she thought forlornly. "Nobody

else gets into wrong houses and bumps her nose, and has to go to college teas looking positively disreputable."

"I wonder if some cold-cream put on the bruise and then lots of powder over it wouldn't hide the discoloration," suggested Polly. "Mother, have you the cold-cream jar?"

Mrs. Jameson did not have it, and a search through the baggage revealed the fact that somewhere on the trip the cold-cream had been left behind. Dick offered to go across to the little general country store opposite the road-house and buy some. He came back laughing.

"The old man over there," he said, "was very sorry that he had no cold-cream, but he offered me junket-tablets, instead. Evidently he thought cold-cream was some kind of a dessert! Too bad, Marge."

"What is Jimmy Matthews like?" asked Bunnie, giving her hat a more becoming tilt.

"Whenever he has come to Renwyck's Town," answered Dick, "he has been a regular society gink. I imagine all his friends are, too."

Margery turned away from the mirror despairingly. A collection of "society ginks" to face seemed the last straw.

By three o'clock the gray towers of Princeton appeared above the budding tree-tops. The girls straightened up with happy anticipation; at last the enchanted moment was at hand. Margery saw Bunnie fluff her hair out over her ears and take a surreptitious peep at the vanity case she had produced from her pocket. Instinctively, Margery straightened her own hat, and pulled her heavy chiffon veil more becomingly away from her nose. Suddenly she stopped and her hand dropped heavily into her lap. In the fresh air and interest in the countryside she had forgotten her swollen face and blackened eye. She put out her hand mournfully for Bunnie's vanity case.

Sam happened to turn around at that moment to speak to Mrs. Jameson and caught Margery ruefully regarding herself in the tiny mirror. "It looks pretty bad, doesn't it?" he said sympathetically. "Any one would think you had been in a fight."

"Margery Morris," chuckled Dick, "the heavy-weight champion of the State."

Margery groaned and was silent. "I'll just have to sit around like a veiled mummy," she thought to herself. "Well, anyway," with a desperate attempt at cheerfulness, "I'll see the buildings—I suppose that's something. And, maybe, when the other girls are having a good time with all the college boys, Sam and Dick will remember to talk to me."

She turned toward Dick. He was sitting beside her, watching those gray towers which every minute were becoming less distant, with an expression of wistfulness and sadness that puzzled her. "I wonder what's the matter with him," she thought. "I've seen him looking like that several times lately."

Mrs. Matthews had arranged for her son to meet them at the Inn, but just as they reached the town Polly suddenly exclaimed:

"Why, there's Jimmy Matthews now! Jim! Jim!"

A young man on the sidewalk stopped and stared at them, then with rather a dazed expression, crossed the pavement to speak to them. He seemed remarkably sunburnt, Margery noticed.

"Well, here we are, Jim—on time," said

Mrs. Jameson. "We were just going down to the Inn to meet you. I suppose that your mother wrote to you that the party is to be increased by the Sullivan girls, who arrive today to visit Mrs. Price. They are to meet us at the dormitory with Mrs. Price, who, being the wife of a professor, presumably knows her way about here. Margery, this is Mr. James Matthews—Miss Morris, and another Miss Morris. Esther and Polly and the boys, of course you know already, Jimmy."

Jimmy Matthews was a pleasant-faced, cleanly built young fellow, and Margery felt if he had not laughed so much, and been so obviously ill at ease, that he would have been very attractive. "Er—er," he stammered, "I was just going down to the Inn to meet you—but—er, I met a chap I knew, and he detained me. Oh—er, excuse me for a moment."

He dashed after a young man just crossing the street ahead of them, and seizing him by the arm pulled him back to the sidewalk. There followed a brief conversation, earnest on Jim's part, and evidently highly amused on the side of the other. Finally, the other

young man stopped laughing and giving Jim a slap on the back went off in the direction of the town.

Jim came back to the car. "Friend of mine," he explained. "I'll cut down to the dorm. now and meet you by the steps. If you would like, you can circle round the streets a bit first, and see things before you come in."

"Oh, get in with us," invited Mrs. Jameson. "We'll go right down with you now. We won't have so very much time here—so we will just have to take a peep at things as we're leaving. These girls will never forgive me, I know, if I waste a minute of this wonderful party."

Jim looked more sunburnt than ever. "Oh, no, Mrs. Jameson," he protested, vehemently, "I wouldn't think of getting in—I'd crowd you too much. Besides, you'll surely want to see the buildings, and you'll enjoy it more without me," he added with one of those unnecessary bursts of laughter of his, which seemed to Margery so remarkable.

"I don't see why Dick calls him a 'society

gink,'" she thought scornfully. "I think he's crazy."

Bunnie was not so scornful; a real, live college man of any kind was greatly to her taste. "Do come," she said coquettishly.

Jimmy hesitated and was lost.

"Do come," repeated Bunnie with a killing glance.

"Hurry up," jerked Sam, and with a last despairing excuse, Jim jumped onto the running-board as the car started off.

Down the wide, pleasant street past old North with its crouching lions they drove to the dormitory where Jim had his rooms. As the car drew up by the curbstone, a lady accompanied by two girls of nineteen or twenty approached. Mrs. Jameson hailed her as Mrs. Price, and there were introductions all round.

Margery looked at the two Miss Sullivans in awe and exasperation. No swollen noses and darkened eyes there; instead, features of maddening elegance. Both girls wore their wide black hats so as to obliterate one eye, after the fashion of the hour, but Margery's faint and irrational hope that it might be to conceal a discolored orb was unfounded. All

four eyes were of a deep, clear, undamaged blue. Margery turned to Jim, expecting to see him overcome with admiration, but he too seemed to be regarding the beauty and style of the two Miss Sullivans with consternation.

"Excuse me for a moment," he muttered, and dashing up the stairs two steps at a time he left them.

The others scarcely noticed his absence, for Mrs. Jameson and Mrs. Price were busily chatting together renewing an old acquaintance, and Sam and Dick were engaged in making themselves irresistible to the two Miss Sullivans. Margery had already discovered, and been amused by, the boys' profound admiration for girls older than themselves. As Jim disappeared up the stairs, Margery edged nearer to Polly and Esther, who were deep in a discussion of what they had seen. "Margery, don't you think ——" began Polly, when Jim came flying down the stairs as he had gone up, two steps at a time.

"Room's ready now," he panted. "Suppose you come up."

They followed him up the stairway to his

study. Margery sidled in after the others and sat down in a big, engulfing chair in the corner. Polly, full of interest in a typical college room, with its photographs and pennants and all the treasures dear to academic youth, beckoned her to come forward, but Margery shook her head so decidedly, and with such evident annoyance, that Polly laughed and let her alone.

"I wonder if my room at college will look like this," she chattered happily away to any one who would listen to her. "Aren't you glad you made up your mind to go to college?" she called to Margery in a final attempt to draw her out.

Feeling like a mixture of Sarah Crewe, Cinderella, and the Ugly Duckling, Margery pulled her chair around so that it hid her from the others and crouched back in its roomy depths. Soon the room would be full of college boys and the wonderful party would have begun; anyway, she decided ruefully, those boys shouldn't have a chance to make fun of her, and her black eye. She leaned over and retied her shoe-lace in an effort to control the sobs that threatened to come unbid-

den. As she straightened up again she noticed a towel and pajama jacket lying on the floor beside the chair. Always instinctively neat, she rolled them up and slipped them into a more inconspicuous place behind the chair. This was a funny party, she thought with an amused shrug of her shoulders; evidently Jim had not had time to clear up for it properly. She looked about the room; it bore signs of having been hastily put into order. And how differently Jim did things from the boys in the book; they had had flowers and candy at every turn, and a maid from the caterer's to assist the girls with their wraps. There were no flowers here, not even a bunch on the tea-table.

The door opened and the young man whom Jim had seized upon when they had first arrived, appeared, somewhat breathless. Jim advanced to meet him.

"Stores are shut up," the young man announced. "Business men's convention, or something. Got these crackers from Holworthy's room—and some tea from Lawrence's. Got a lemon from Bill, and these spoons."

Jim took the things from his friend in silence.

"Can't you take them to the Inn, or somewhere for tea?"

Jim sighed. "The trouble is, Alec, Mother promised them all a tea here in the rooms. They can't stay very long, Mrs. Jameson says, —I'm afraid anyway if I shunt them off that they'll catch on that I've forgotten they were coming."

"What made you forget?"

Jim clapped his hand to his heated forehead. "More than I know! Mother wrote me about it—I put the letter in my pocket. Thought about it several times—meant to look up the exact hour and date; and then I forgot. I wouldn't mind if it weren't for the Sullivans. Peaches, aren't they? I never met them before—but they're friends of Giles Lawrence's. Oh, I'll never hear the end of this mess!"

The boys moved over toward the tea-table, and Margery, hidden in her big chair, doubled up in silent laughter. So Jim had forgotten the party. No wonder he acted so queerly, and seemed so ill at ease. She glanced across

"WHAT MADE YOU FORGET?"

the room; Jim hovered unhappily around the tea-table, lighting the alcohol lamp, and slicing lemon, while his friend Alec deserted him for the Sullivan girls, who were also focusing all the attention of Sam and Dick. Esther and Polly looked out of the window, full of interest in all that they saw in the yard below. Bunnie sat on a stiff little chair beside them, her pretty face clouded. Plainly, she was feeling neglected and disappointed. "And this is a college party!" her expression said only too clearly. "Now, I'm the kind of a person that expects a good time."

Jim evidently read it so, and turned redder and laughed more hilariously than ever. Margery stopped smiling and looked at him in sympathy. That poor boy was trying to give a party and was in difficulties over it. It must be dreadful to have a whole army of people plump down on one, and to be expected to entertain them brilliantly—and to have nothing ready!

In his embarrassment Jim turned the flame of the alcohol lamp down, then up, then down again, too far down, for he turned it out. A frantic search through his pockets revealed

that he had no matches and he crossed the room to search on the mantelpiece beside Margery's chair.

Margery leaned forward. "I have some cakes I can give you," she said softly.

Jim started. "I—oh, that's ——" he stammered.

"I know you didn't expect us," Margery went on. "I have some cakes in the car that will help out—and there are some flowers that we were taking to your mother. Suppose we go and get them."

Jim regarded her in speechless gratitude. "Come on," he said.

Tiptoeing, and laughing a little, they slipped quietly out of the room. As they ran down the stairs, Margery hastily explained about the cakes, and Jim, in return, gave an incoherent explanation of how it had happened that he had overlooked their coming.

"I'm afraid that you're having a mighty dull time," he regretted, as Margery climbed into the car and handed out the box of cakes. "Sitting off by yourself that way. I'm awfully sorry about it all. Even if I am rattled

there's no sense in my being such a poor host."

Margery felt very much at ease with poor, helpless Jim. "You're doing beautifully—under the circumstances," she consoled him with a maternal little manner that made him smile. "But the reason I was sitting apart that way was that I'm such a fright."

"Such a fright? Oh, no!"

"Such a fright," answered Margery firmly. "I have a black eye—I ran into a bedpost and almost killed myself. So you see I don't feel much like talking to people—or like taking off my veil."

"How did it happen?"

Margery told him briefly the tale of her misadventures. It had not occurred to her before that they were funny, but as Jim shouted with laughter, she too began to see the humorous side.

"We're companions in misfortune," asserted Jim. "Thank goodness somebody else is in a fix, too."

Margery suddenly felt immensely cheered. "It's just as well I can't lift my veil," she said sagely, "for I'll have to have some excuse for

not eating anything. There won't be enough cakes to go round unless it's a case of 'family hold back' for you and me."

Jim looked at her admiringly. "You're a good little sport."

Outside the study door Margery paused. "Now if you'll just persuade everybody to go out and take a walk, and see the sights—I'll persuade Mrs. Jameson to stay back with me, and we'll arrange the tea-table and everything."

"You're a brick," murmured Jim.

Margery was so impatient to get everybody out of the way that she never quite knew how Jim, with the aid of a few menacing words hissed into the ear of his friend Alec, managed to persuade the others that it was nothing short of criminal to visit a college and not see all the buildings, or how it was decided that her eye would interfere with her powers of locomotion to such an extent that she must stay behind with Mrs. Jameson and Jim, gallantly self-sacrificing, for company.

As the others trooped out Mrs. Jameson was told of the dreadful predicament. She was frankly amused, but she entered heartily into the spirit of their endeavors, and contributed a

bottle of olives and a pound of peppermints, which she had tucked away in the car for emergencies, to the collation.

"Now then," ordered Margery, as Jim returned from a borrowing tour, "go and get all the boys you can—any sort will do—and tell them to make a particular fuss over Bunnie Morris. She's the pretty girl with the frizzled-out hair over her ears."

Jim obediently hurried off, and Margery and Mrs. Jameson finished arranging a bowl of the arbutus, which, with the aid of plenty of damp moss, had been kept fresh and fragrant. All too soon for their host, the others came back, and the room began to fill with boys who drifted in by ones and twos; boys with singularly modest appetites, Margery noted.

"Can Margery sing or play or anything?" whispered Jim to Mrs. Jameson, when only two crackers and three olives remained.

"She sings very sweetly," Mrs. Jameson answered.

Jim thrust a banjo into Margery's hands. "Sing something," he commanded. "We *must* make things go!"

If he had asked her to fight a duel or swim the Hellespont, Margery could not have been more appalled. "I—I can't," she objected.

But she had undertaken to make the party a success, and Margery, well launched on any project, was not easily to be deterred; accordingly, she threw back her veil. What should she sing? She remembered a lively air which she had heard old Thomas of the Morris farm singing. Picking at the banjo strings she began:

"Ah danced wid a gal wid a hole in her stockin',
An' her heel kep' arockin',
Her heel kep' arockin';
Ah danced wid a gal wid a hole in her stockin',
An' her heel kep' arockin', kep' arockin'."

By the time she had sung it twice over the others took it up, and sang it over and over again, delighted with its catchy air. Then the prettier of the Sullivan girls remembered a darky song that she knew, and Margery willingly handed over the banjo. Keenly conscious of the puzzled looks some of the boys had cast at her eye and nose, she pulled down her veil and slipped back into her quiet corner.

More boys drifted in, and the party became a lively one. Bunnie was the center of a jolly group, and the two pretty Sullivans, who were not unknown to college fame, held a regular little reception of their own. Polly, with her unconscious, gracious manners, was instantly popular, and Esther was a close second. Margery, alone in her quiet corner again, felt forlorn and neglected.

But Jim had no intention that she should be slighted. When he was not overcome with embarrassment at having a party thrust upon him, he was an amiable, courteous youth, with an easy, pleasant manner. Now, as he sat down beside her and began to talk, Margery found him an entertaining companion. Jim, on his side, thought her "all right," and so famously did they get on together that Alec and another of the boys decided to join them and share the fun. In whispers that were choked with laughter, the four discussed the impromptu character of the tea, and also the ludicrous aspects of Margery's accident. When it was time to leave, Margery was sure that she never had spent so merry an afternoon.

As they went down the stairs to the car, Bunnie slipped her arm through Margery's. Having had a delightful time, Bunnie, after a fashion of human nature, was rebellious that life was not all gayety.

"Did you have an awfully dull time with no one to talk to?" she began. "I had a perfect crowd around me the whole time."

Margery, secure in Jim's grateful appreciation, only smiled.

"That's the kind of time I'd always have," Bunnie went on, "if it wasn't for Dick. He makes such a fuss if I go much with Harry Richards,—and then, of course, Grandfather takes it up. Nobody seems to realize that I'm dying of loneliness! I'm not a stick or a stone—I have to have friends."

"Why, Bunnie," exclaimed Margery, "you have plenty of friends!"

"Harry is the only one who tries to understand me," answered Bunnie with a plaintive tone in her voice.

"Why don't you make friends with some of the girls?" suggested Margery. "I mean, be a real chum."

"But who is there?" asked Bunnie, still

more plaintively. "You and Polly and Esther are so absorbed that you have no time for other people."

Margery was silent.

The last good-byes were said, with Jim and his friend Alec standing on the curbstone, and the travelers were off toward Trenton, where they were to spend the night. Margery was quiet, absorbed in the beautiful buildings, the old trees and the magnolias coming into flower. She was thinking of Bunnie, too, not quite comprehending, as many an older and wiser person has not grasped, that that age-old, pathetic plea to be "understood" might be mere rhetoric.

Bunnie, she felt, needed her friendship; should she make a sacrifice and offer it to her? Bunnie, she knew, would make an exacting chum. But she really needed some one who could take Harry's place as an "understanding" sympathizer. And could she, Margery, pretend to be a mascot, and do less? She sighed deeply.

Polly turned toward her at the sigh, and put her hand affectionately on Margery's. "Did you have a good time, old lady?" she

asked. "You and Jim seemed to be having an awfully jolly time together. And, oh, weren't the buildings beautiful?"

Sam turned around. "Those cakes of Jim's were fine," he said. "They looked like those old Hans made for you, Margery. By the way, won't they get stale unless we eat them soon?"

Margery and Mrs. Jameson looked at each other and smiled. "I think you've already eaten those cakes," said Margery demurely.

CHAPTER XIII

BUNNIE

"POLLY, did it ever occur to you that Bunnie is lonely?" asked Margery, several days after their return from the automobile trip.

Polly was skeptical. "Bunnie? Lonely?" she laughed.

"Well, she is."

"Well, it's her own fault, then. She could have lots of friends if she wanted them. But she just wants to be with Harry all the time —and maybe one or two of those older boys. She thinks we girls are too slow to bother about. I invited her to join the L. A. L., but she absolutely scorned us."

"But she's very nice when I go to see her."

"Of course she is—I'd be nice to you myself! Besides," Polly was still skeptical, "Mr. Morris doesn't like Harry being there all the time; but if you're there, too, he

doesn't mind so much. Dick told me that. Are you going home now? If you are, I'll drive you out, and spend the afternoon with you—provided you want me to, of course."

Margery was silent; how should she explain to Polly that she had arranged to spend the afternoon with Bunnie, and also that she felt it her duty to be a mascot to her and give her the "understanding" friendship she felt was needed. "I—well—I'm going out to see Bunnie," she began.

"Well, all right then," answered Polly, with apparent readiness, and retreated into the post-office, in front of which the conversation had taken place, where she astonished the clerk by asking dreamily for "three two-cent Margerys." She was feeling puzzled and a little hurt.

Unconscious of the emotions she had aroused, Margery went serenely on her way through the town, across the old covered bridge and out into the country. Before her stretched the little strip of woodland lying between the Morris farm and Renwyck's Town. At present it was full of spring treasures, and Margery decided on following the

little rill that here and there in its winding course approached the road, and gathering anemones and jack-in-the-pulpits for Deborah. Suddenly, as she bent over a cluster of frail pink blossoms, she heard the soft pad-pad of footsteps on the sandy road and peeping through the bushes she spied a man coming. For a moment her heart stood still, less in fear than in the knowledge that she had been thoughtlessly disobeying her grandfather's strict injunction that she never linger alone in the woods. Hoping that her soft green sweater and brown skirt would be unnoticed amidst the spring verdure, she crouched silently down.

The steps drew nearer and Dick swung into view; not head up and gayly whistling as was his wont, but with his hands thrust deep into his pockets and his head down.

"Dick! Dick!" called Margery.

Dick stopped and looked about him. "You there, Margery?" he exclaimed in astonishment. "What are you doing here? I don't believe your grandfather would like your being in the woods alone."

"I'm going to your house."

"Rather a sedentary way of doing it,—sitting there by the brook. Better come along, hadn't you?"

Margery got up, her hands full of treasures, and joined Dick.

"What's the matter, Dick?" asked Margery suddenly, her lips voicing her thoughts, somewhat to her own surprise. "You don't look very cheerful."

"Nothing much—I was just thinking about college, that's all."

They trudged along in silence again; Dick was evidently not in a talkative mood.

"But what about college?" asked Margery as they came out of the woods. "Do you want to go?"

"Yes." Dick's answer was discouragingly short. "You see," he went on after another interval of silence, "I want to be an architect, as Father was. But Grandfather doesn't approve of it. The only college he thinks I need is an agricultural college. You see, Grandfather owns lots of land and wants me to stay on it and run it. He wasn't happy in the city himself and he thinks that he is doing the kindest thing for me. He's all the

more keen about it, because Uncle Harry disappointed him and insisted on going away. But of course Uncle Harry had the excuse of his health. Oh, I don't undervalue the country life—it's the happiest life of all—for the people that are fitted for it. But I'd like to have a taste of something else first."

"Can't you persuade your grandfather to let you have a college career, anyway—and then decide what you'll do after you graduate?"

"That's what I want to do—but Grandfather doesn't see it that way. Oh, I suppose that I'll get there some way—people usually do if they try hard enough—but I'd rather go with Grandfather approving—and without all this friction."

"It's too bad," said Margery, sincerely sympathetic.

"Oh, it'll come out all right in the end," returned Dick, more grateful than he appeared for her sympathy. "I'll just have to put myself through college, some way or other. I wish I wasn't so dumb—I'd take a whack at that prize at school they are offering."

"Would that take you to college?"

"It would take me nearly to the doors—and that would be some help. Anyway, it might help to convince Grandfather."

"But, Dick, I don't see why you say you're dumb. You're a wiz at mathematics and physics."

"Yes, I manage pretty well with them—it's history and English that floor me. They pull my marks away down, and then Grandfather gets disgusted over my reports. I can't say that I blame him. The trouble with the history and English is that I don't seem to be able to get up enough interest in them. I like old Billy Shakespeare, and shine up to Richard the First. But I can't take any stock in the other people we have to study about. It's all one to me whether Milton wrote Mother Goose, or worked in a boiler factory, —or whether the Magna Charta was a piece of music or a new kind of sausage."

"Well, I'd study about them, and go in and win that prize, and convince your grandfather."

"I wish I could," said Dick doubtfully.

They turned in at the gate of the Morris farm, and walked down the avenue of pine-

trees leading to the house. Margery had come to know Dick well enough by this time to recognize that his offhand manner was covering real depression. She felt sorry for him, but she could see no way out of his difficulties, so with a certain relief she turned to Benjamin, running down the avenue to meet them.

"Hello, Margie," he cried, throwing his arms around her waist, "I'm awful glad to see you, and my puppy can walk on his hind legs and Deborah's gone to a missionary meeting," he rattled on all in a breath. "Bunnie has company. Harry Richards is here—Grandfather thinks she ought to have more girls come to see her, and not Harry so often. Doesn't he, Dick?"

Dick frowned, and then laughed. "I can't see what Bunnie likes in Harry except his taste in socks," and Dick looked down with satisfaction at the somewhat vivid articles adorning his own ankles.

Margery smiled to herself, and swinging Benjamin's hand in hers, strolled up the portico steps and into the house.

"Hello, Margery," Bunnie's voice came

from the library. "Come in. Harry Richards is here."

Bunnie and Harry were sitting on the sofa, a large box of chocolates between them. Margery was forced to admit that Harry certainly "understood" Bunnie in the matter of candy. She herself was already growing tired of the young gentleman. She disliked to have to sit idly by while Harry and Bunnie indulged in endless conversations about nothing at all, in which she had no part, and which she considered silly. Nothing but her firm determination to be a mascot to Bunnie, and to help her to better things, made her endure it.

To-day she was relieved when it was suggested that they play tennis. Bunnie already had on tennis shoes, and Margery was told that she would find others in the cupboard of Bunnie's room. Light-heartedly she ran up the stairs to that room which had once been hers and which seemed so different now that another was occupying it. She smiled to herself as she tied on the shoes to think what a different Margery had first come there.

"How I did detest Dick!" she thought,

starting down-stairs again. "Poor Dick—I'm afraid he has his troubles."

She ran swiftly down the stairs, the thin rubber soles of her tennis shoes making no noise.

At the open front door, Harry and Bunnie, rackets in hand, were standing, talking earnestly. "But I can't help it, you know, Harry," Bunnie was saying plaintively. "I have to be polite."

With a bound Margery cleared the last two steps. The speakers in the doorway turned sharply, and Harry began to talk rapidly of a puppy he had bought the day before. Her cheeks flushed, and feeling uncomfortable, she scarcely knew why, Margery turned to search for a racket in the cupboard under the stairs.

Dick was discovered back of the house repairing the tire of his bicycle, and was dragged off to be a partner for Margery. They were evenly matched opponents, for if Bunnie was a better player than Margery, Dick was superior to Harry, and the games were long and exciting. It was very pleasant in the gentle spring sunshine, the cherry-trees beside the court were white with bloom, and the air

was fragrant from a giant bed of pink and white hyacinths in the garden beyond. Antagonisms were forgotten in the interest of the game, and Margery found herself thinking that after all Harry was "rather fun," and that he certainly was good-looking.

An automobile horn sounded from the front of the house. "There's Walter," said Bunnie. "Must you go?"

"I'm afraid I'll have to. I have to stop at Mrs. Watts for a skirt that she has been altering for me. Before Miss Tucker left, she and I went to the city together and bought some clothes for me, but some of them have to be altered."

As the car started, Harry Richards sprang lightly on the running-board, and swung his long legs over into the seat beside Margery. "You're a cold little puss," he remarked reproachfully. "Never think of offering a fellow a lift when you're going his way!"

As cordially as she could, Margery explained that she had taken it for granted that he had come out to the farm in his own little runabout. She chattered away gayly, but she could not help feeling that her grand-

father would not have been pleased had he seen her. In common with Bunnie's grandfather and Mrs. Jameson, he did not approve of young Harry, and had expressed his opinion quite frankly that he, for one, did not care to have his granddaughter seen with him, unless he made some efforts to improve his ways.

The car bounced across the old covered bridge, turned a corner and stopped at Mrs. Watts' little white cottage. Mrs. Watts herself appeared at the door, and announced if they would wait "a shake," she would wrap up the skirt and bring it out.

Margery rather hoped that Harry would seize this opportunity to say good-bye. His home was only a block away, and it scarcely seemed worth while for him to sit in the car waiting with her. Harry, however, plainly had no idea of leaving her. He rattled on, laughing a good deal, and paying but little attention to Margery's somewhat absent answers. As they sat there, waiting for Mrs. Watts' shake, there was the clip-clop-clip of a horse's feet in the quiet street, and Polly came up back of them in her cart.

She opened her eyes in astonishment as she

saw Margery and Harry sitting together, and on such apparent good terms. To her annoyance, Margery found herself blushing.

"Hello, Polly," Margery called with forced vivacity.

"Hello," said Polly quietly, and drove on.

CHAPTER XIV

DICK

"WELL, what is new to-day?" Margery's grandfather asked at dinner that evening.

To the lonely man, Margery's coming had opened up a new life. In spite of himself, the recluse had been brought out of his seclusion, and once more in touch with his kind. He had come to feel an interest, not only in Margery's affairs, but in all that happened to the boys and girls who composed her circle. Margery understood something, if not all, of what it meant to her grandfather, and took pains to recount to him any item of news that might interest or amuse him.

"Well," she said, considering, "I had my music lesson. Just as I was leaving Dr. Huston came to take Miss Patty out to see some of his patients. She cheered Gertrude Brown up so well that now he takes her to see lots of sick people and sing for them.

And then, I saw Polly for a few minutes." Margery hurried over that part of her story; she could scarcely have told why. "And then—oh, yes, I met Dick on the way out to see Bunnie. He seemed awfully blue at first. After while I found out that it was because he wants to go to college and his grandfather won't let him."

"Won't let him? Why not?"

"Because he wants him to 'live on the land,' and be a 'gentleman farmer.'"

"He might do that, and still be a farmer. I imagine that there's something back of it. Mr. Morris unfortunately holds a peculiar rancor against the memory of Dick's father. He never forgave him for running off, when he was poor and unknown, with Dick's mother. The old gentleman, for all his simple ways of doing things, is proud. Dick's father was an unusually talented man—an architect, and they tell me Dick is like him in many ways."

"I think, too, that part of the trouble is that Mr. Morris thinks Dick is stupid."

"Dick stupid? I thought that he was supposed to be brilliant."

"He is in some things. If he were only brilliant in everything—history and literature, for instance, he could win the prize—the examinations come pretty soon for it—and *show* his grandfather."

Mr. Morris was plainly interested, but he said nothing more beyond, "Dick is a fine lad. I have great faith in Dick."

After dinner, Margery brought out her school-books and curled up on the big davenport to wrestle with Cæsar. Her grandfather sat quietly reading on the other side of the fire.

As she finished her lessons and packed her books together, Mr. Morris looked up. "Margery," he began.

"Yes, Grandpapa."

"Margery, why don't you tell Dick that you and I will help him with his work if he cares to come out here in the evenings. Dick has a good brain, and is interested in things that are worth while. I believe that the trouble lies in old-fashioned, wooden methods of teaching."

Margery was fond of Dick and thoroughly enjoyed his society, but she groaned a little in

spirit at the thought of the extra studying involved. She herself had no trouble in grasping enough of the intricacies of English history and the peculiarities of literature to make a fairly creditable showing, and she felt that to have to know more would be a bore.

Nevertheless, she said obediently, "Very well, Grandpapa, I'll speak to him to-morrow."

She met Dick the next morning just as he was entering the school gate and stopped to tell him of her grandfather's plan. "Sure, I'll come," Dick said gratefully. "It's mighty nice of you, Margery, to do that for me."

"It was Grandpapa," Margery was beginning honestly, when Dick cut in with:

"I hope I shan't disappoint you—that's all."

"You won't disappoint me," Margery answered cordially, if ambiguously.

Promptly at quarter past seven that evening Dick appeared at the White House Farm. Margery and her grandfather were sitting before a small fire in the library, while Margery read aloud the evening paper.

"Well, Dick," said Mr. Morris, "I'm glad

to see you. This little girl of mine is feeling somewhat homesick, and perhaps you can help to cheer her up."

"Why, Grandpapa," cried Margery astonished, "how did you know that I was homesick?"

Mr. Morris laughed and poked the fire in answer. "Your father and mother will be here soon," he said, turning to the bookcase behind him and bringing out a big illustrated volume of Sir Walter Besant's "Old London." Besides being a remarkably kind-hearted man, Mr. Morris was one of wide reading and cultivation. He was fond of Dick, and understanding the boy, realized that all he needed was to be inspired and interested. Accordingly, he began to talk about the England of Addison's day—Dick, he knew from Margery, having particular trouble with the Sir Roger de Coverly Papers—describing with vivid, amusing touch the fine ladies of the time with their paint and powder, their "vapors" and affectations; the bands of roystering, gay young men who after nightfall made the streets a terror for respectable, timid citizens; the coffee houses where the fops

showed off the latest fads in lace ruffles and powdered wigs, and the brilliant men of letters made their wittiest or wisest speeches.

Dick was interested and asked questions that were keen and intelligent. Mr. Morris was delighted with his pupil, and when at nine o'clock Dick left, they were both sincere in declaring that they had spent an unusually pleasant evening.

After that Dick came almost every evening, and Margery learned to enjoy those quiet evenings in the big library. There would be a small fire on the hearth for Mr. Morris's comfort, although the windows were left open to admit the soft spring breezes and the fragrance of the spring nights. Dick, too, enjoyed the evenings; the history and literature that he had found so boring became fascinating. The Magna Charta he had declared so uninteresting he came to see as the mother of the Declaration of Independence. In the history of the older land he saw the long struggle of the Anglo-Saxon for freedom and democracy, with its pushing out of the stronger, restless natures to America—and the final revolt of the Colonies from its German

king; a grandson of that German whom the Scotch had satirized with:

> "Wha do ye think we hae gotten for a king,
> But a wee, wee German lairdie!
> An' when they gaed tae bring him ower,
> He was delvin' in his ain kail yairdie!"

and against whom many of them had risen in brave if unsuccessful rebellion.

"I say, Margery," ventured Dick one evening as he and Margery walked up and down on the brick terrace while Mr. Morris finished his after dinner doze, "couldn't you try to make Bunnie and Harry more sensible when they are together? They are so awfully silly—and well, soft, and—and"—he hesitated and stammered a little, "Polly's a nice girl, too."

"I know Polly's a nice girl, as well as you do," answered Margery, heatedly. She had been a little hurt by Polly's unusual reserve lately. "But I can't help it if Polly doesn't want to do things, can I? I asked her to spend the night here to-night, but she said she had another engagement."

"Perhaps she thinks that you have rather

neglected her for Bunnie and Harry," suggested Dick. He had called at the Jamesons' to return a book that afternoon, and had found Polly as out-of-sorts as it was in her sweet, happy nature to be, and in a mood to be confidential. Being genuinely fond of both girls, Dick was anxious to blow away the cloud that seemed to be absurdly rising on their horizon.

"Well, she thinks wrong then," Margery declared. "I'm just as fond of Polly as I can be—fonder than I am of any other girl. I'm only with Bunnie such a lot because the other girls aren't kind and understanding to her and she needs me."

"Oh," said Dick blankly.

Margery felt that it was entirely too bad of Polly and Dick and everybody to misunderstand her. She felt, too, despairingly, that instead of pulling Bunnie up to her standards, she was descending to Bunnie's. At first she had considered Bunnie and Harry and their conversations and actions as utterly vapid and silly; now she found herself accepting them as a matter of course, and even imitating them.

Walter came around the house from the stable and spoke to her, interrupting her thoughts. "I went to town for Mr. Morris, Miss Margery," he said, "and I stopped at the post-office on the way out—the mail was late this afternoon."

Margery took the letters he held out to her; in the dusk her fingers recognized the thin foreign paper on which her mother always wrote. "Goody," she cried, switching on the porch light by the door, "here's a letter from Mamma!"

With eagerness she tore open the envelope and held the pages up to the light. "Dearest little girl," she read. "Do you remember the motto you wrote me the doctor had taught you about kindness in your neighbor's trouble and courage in your own? Well, I want you to use all your courage now, and be as brave as you can, and not let dear Grandpapa see that you are disappointed." Margery paused and with beating heart skimmed through the pages until she should find what it was about which her mother was urging her to be brave. Here it was:

"We find that we cannot possibly be back

until the middle of July, or more likely, the first of August."

Dick spoke at her elbow. "Not bad news, I hope."

Margery raised brimming eyes. "Yes," she nodded, too miserable to speak, and disappeared into the house.

CHAPTER XV

GOSSIP

DURING recess the next morning, Polly slipped her arm through Margery's and drew her aside. "Margery Daw," she confided, "I'm going to give a party."

"A party? Oh, Polly, how perfect! When?"

"The day of the boys' tennis tournament at the country club. We are going to ask a lot of the girls, and the boys who aren't playing, to watch the games, and then afterward we'll have refreshments for everybody in the club-house, and maybe dance. You'll be sure to come,—and to help me make things go, won't you?"

"Indeed I will," promised Margery readily. She would have promised to aid in anything, even had it been far less entrancing than a party, for the pleasure of seeing the little cloud lift that had arisen between her and

Polly. "I'd simply love to. And, do you know, Polly, it's comforting to have something to look forward to—for I'm as blue as blue can be. I had a letter from Mamma last night, and she and Papa won't be back until the middle of July, or, more likely, the first of August! Isn't it awful? I try to keep Grandpapa from knowing how I feel about it —but I am awfully blue."

Polly's quick, responsive sympathy was cheering, and as they walked arm in arm, under the old trees, Margery's heart grew lighter.

"Polly," she said suddenly, "do you know we haven't had a meeting of the L. A. L. for ages?"

"You've been doing other things," Polly said quietly. "Esther and I had a meeting the other afternoon, all to ourselves. We each wrote an account of the Princeton visit, and Mother sent them to Mrs. Matthews, as she thought they might amuse her. Margery, do you know, we've been wondering if it wouldn't be better to turn the L. A. L. into a cooking club."

"Oh, but Polly, Lady Anne Lindsay was

a poetess, not a cook. And remember, we named it after her particularly."

"Yes, but remember what Father always quotes to Mother when Missouri is particularly trying: 'We may live without friends, we may live without books; but civilized man cannot live without cooks.' If we had a cooking club we could have Bunnie, and then, every once in a while, we could give a dinner and ask the boys to it. You and Bunnie might like that better. Oh, by the way, Margery," Polly hesitated and looked uncomfortable, "we aren't going to invite Harry to the party. Father is a sort of guardian of his, you know, and when he spoke to him the other evening about the way he is spending too much money, and making his mother so unhappy and worried, Harry was awfully saucy to him, and told him to 'attend to his own affairs,' and so forth."

Margery slipped her arm closer around Polly's waist. "Polly," she began, "it's because of Bunnie——" She was about to say, "It is because of Bunnie's loneliness and need of a friend, and not because of Harry Richards that I am with them so much," but the school

bell rang just then, and the golden opportunity was lost.

Bravely as she tried to keep her grandfather from discovering how disappointed she felt over the postponement of her parents' coming, Margery could not conceal a telltale wistfulness. Her grandfather, full of sympathy, glanced at her every now and then with a sigh, and cleared his throat; old Kiley was pitying to the point of concocting the most delicious and indigestible desserts in the cook-book; even Waldo, the big mastiff, slipped his head up under her arm and wagged his stump of a tail in commiseration. Margery smiled as cheerfully as she could on the household, although she would have bedewed her pillow every night with tears had not sleep persisted in catching her first.

She saw Polly only once again after their conversation, for Polly, gardening in damp earth with more ardor than discretion, had renewed a heavy cold and been ordered to seclusion and bed by the doctor. Nevertheless, they held frequent delightful, and on Polly's part husky, conversations over the telephone on the subject of the approaching party, at which Polly

declared she was going to appear, even if she had to croak like a frog, have her neck swathed in red flannel bandages, and gargle every five minutes with the concoction of honey and onions recommended by Missouri.

Full of anticipation, Margery took one of her new frocks, a pale blue batiste, to Mrs. Watts to have such alterations made as were needed to insure its perfect fit. Mrs. Watts took the business of dressmaking seriously, and their conferences were long and serious over the relative merits of hooks and snappers, and the superiority of a six inch to a five inch hem.

Once or twice she met the doctor on the street, and stopped him to extol Miss Patty and to dwell on the pleasure her visits gave to Gertrude Brown. He agreed with her cordially; in fact, Margery would have preferred a more lover-like coyness, but she consoled herself with the fact that the doctor was no longer young, and that she must not expect too much.

Bunnie came almost every afternoon to see her, and soon after her arrival Harry Richards would come drifting in, and when the time

came would take her home in his small runabout. Margery wished that helping Bunnie did not include quite so much of Harry's society, but she bore it with what grace she could, thankful that they usually preferred to be on the croquet ground or in the garden, where their chatter could not disturb her grandfather or lead him to ask too many questions.

At half-past seven every evening Dick appeared, and Margery grew to enjoy the hour of study almost as much as did Dick and her grandfather, and her marks at school became quite phenomenal.

The morning of Polly's party arrived, and Mrs. Watts, prostrate on her hands and knees, with her head down like an Arab praying to Mecca, solemnly inspected Margery's new blue batiste from that angle. "Yes, that hangs perfectly grand," she murmured, her face against the carpet. "Now keep still, and screw around to the right—just a scrimption! Now—just a mite to the left. Yes, that hangs perfectly even."

Margery obediently "screwed" to the right and the left, and tried not to giggle.

"Now then," said Mrs. Watts, rising to her

feet, "you'll be able to wear it to the party this afternoon. Funny what a lot of alteration it took, wasn't it? You won't mind settin' an' waitin', will you, while I sew on the snappers down the placket?"

"No, indeed, I'll be glad to."

Mrs. Watts sat down by one window with the skirt in her lap, while Margery sat by the other, idly turning over the leaves of a fashion-book and glancing now and then out into the quiet old-fashioned street, so charming now in its spring-time green.

"This street is pretty quiet," observed Mrs. Watts, glancing up over her spectacles. "And yet a body does see a lot, too. There's a good many takes a short cut through here instead of going around to the main street and past the hotel. Your friend Miss Polly Jameson goes through here quite often, it bein' the back way to their stable. I've often seen you with her. 'My, them girls is thick,' I says to Mrs. Stenton one day—I was makin' up her black cashmere—no, it was her alpaca; she had cashmere last year. An' Mrs. Stenton, she says, 'Yes, they certainly are.' Nowadays, I see you sometimes with Miss Morris

and Harry Richards. Well, Harry is a fine looking fellow; I don't wonder all you girls are crazy about him."

Margery rocked back and forth impatiently in the little rocking-chair. She did wish, she thought wearily, that people would stop taking it for granted that she was so overcome by the charms of Harry's society.

"There goes Mrs. Gail," babbled on Mrs. Watts without waiting for a reply; "her son's just engaged himself to a girl from Easton. An' there goes Miss Patty Kirkby. I see her sometimes with Dr. Huston. 'Funny if they should make a match,' I says to myself, sometimes."

Margery tried to look unconscious, but only succeeded in looking very mysterious and significant. Mrs. Watts looked at her in surprise. "Know anything?" she asked with kindly interest. "I certainly would be glad to see some happiness come for Miss Patty—even if the doctor is kinda old for her. I'm mighty fond of Miss Patty—in the old days when they had money and I was just gettin' a start the Kirkbys was awful good to me."

Margery hesitated; she had been brought up to abhor all appearance even of gossip. On the other hand, Mrs. Watts was so evidently kindly intentioned toward Miss Patty and so interested that to refuse to discuss the matter would be to snub her. "Well," she temporized, "I certainly have hopes for it."

"I ain't never seen a sweeter, patienter person than Miss Patty Kirkby, and Dr. Huston would make her a good husband, I guess—at any rate he'd try his best."

"What's that?" said a voice from the doorway. They looked up. Mrs. Stenton, a customer of Mrs. Watts', stood in the doorway. "What's that you were saying about Miss Kirkby?" she demanded again.

Mrs. Watts pulled a chair forward. "If you don't mind waiting a few minutes, Mrs. Stenton, until I finish this for Miss Margery, I'll have your dress all ready. It looks fine—that lace you sent is awful dressy."

Mrs. Stenton sat down with an annoyed expression. "I can wait, if you aren't too long." She reached for a fashion-book. "You were talking about Miss Patty Kirkby?" she remarked tentatively, as she turned the

leaves. "I heard you saying that she is to marry Dr. Huston."

Mrs. Watts threw a warning glance to Margery that said plainly Mrs. Stenton was not to be trusted. "Umm, yes—we did mention it," she mumbled, biting off a thread.

Mrs. Stenton turned another page. She was a tall, gaunt woman with a thin-lipped, sarcastic mouth, who being well-to-do and related to almost every one of importance in Renwyck's Town was tolerated, although she had neither amiability nor good sense to recommend her. She had been a girlhood friend of Miss Patty's, and had never been quite able to forgive her for the fact that she evinced neither envy nor admiration for Mrs. Stenton's pretty house, faultfinding husband and ill-bred children, but had gone on her own serene, cheerful way.

"Well, the doctor's too old for her," she shrugged now, "but I suppose that it is the best she can do. I always said that affair with Duncan Patterson would never last."

Margery's cheeks flamed scarlet. Her beloved doctor to be spoken about like this by that odious woman! Dr. Huston, who had

been so kind to her when she needed it, and who had taken such good care of her when she was ill! And Miss Patty, dear Miss Patty!

"I consider Dr. Huston perfectly delightful," she said haughtily, standing up and looking very tall and dignified indeed. "And so does my grandfather. And everybody agrees that Miss Patty is charming and absolutely wasted here."

"I—I always thought Duncan Patterson was powerful sweet on Miss Patty," faltered Mrs. Watts, meekly anxious to pour oil on the troubled waters. "There, Miss Margery, your dress is done now."

Mrs. Stenton rose and began to undo her collar before the pier-glass. "I always said Duncan Patterson never cared for Patty," she said calmly.

Mrs. Watts wrapped up the dress, and Margery left, still warm with loyal indignation.

CHAPTER XVI

POLLY'S PARTY

"It's a perfect day for Polly's party, isn't it, Grandpapa?" said Margery at luncheon.

Mr. Morris helped himself to asparagus. "Yes," he said absently, "very fine, very fine. Is this asparagus from our garden or from the market, Katie? I wish you'd find out. What's that you were saying, Margery? Oh, yes, about Polly's party."

"It will be lovely out at the club," Margery remarked dreamily. "I love the river and the boats, particularly the big sailing vessels, and—and everything. I've promised, Grandpapa, to go out early and help Polly—won't it be fun?"

As she rose from the table, Margery thought to herself that one of the nicest things about the party was that Harry Richards would not be there. He had been making her feel uncomfortable of late. While he still

talked more to Bunnie than to Margery he had a provoking little way of taking it for granted that he and she had some special understanding and he was always teasing her about being cold and dignified. She was disappointed too in the results of her friendship with Bunnie. That Bunnie had a certain force and could be quite capable, Margery had to admit, but her overwhelming conceit and her inability to recognize the existence of any one else had grown wearing. Her mannerism, too, of constantly preening herself and saying "Now, I'm different from other people" had come to be very annoying. But most of all, Margery felt a certain lack of sincerity.

Puzzling over these things, Margery went up to her room to inspect the new blue frock, which she had asked Sarah to give a final pressing. It was spread out on the bed in state, and Margery was bending over it, thinking how fresh and spring-like it looked, when Sarah appeared at the door.

"Miss Margery," she announced, "Miss Bunnie, and Mr. Harry Richards are downstairs to see you."

"Bother!" With a sigh Margery turned from her frock, and went slowly down the stairs, across the wide hall, out to the front steps. Bunnie and Harry were there in Harry's little runabout.

"Come on," cried Bunnie. "We want you to come with us to Monroe—Harry has to get a hat his mother has had trimmed there."

"Oh, Bunnie—I can't! It's Polly's party to-day."

"Yes, I know—I'm going, too. But it's only quarter of two now, and we'll be back in plenty of time. Polly doesn't expect any one until four, you know."

"Yes, I know. But I have to dress—besides, I'm to go early and help Polly."

Harry looked at her with that half teasing, half admiring expression she had come to hate. "Does it take you all that time to prink?" he laughed. "And what a good little girl to get there exactly on time!"

Margery flushed, but she stood her ground firmly. "No—I'm really ever so sorry, but I cannot go."

"Oh, Margery," Bunnie cried, "you'll have to. I promised Grandfather faithfully that

you would go. You wouldn't have me break my word, would you?—I'm the kind of person that keeps my word, you know."

Margery hesitated. Of all arguments this was the one most likely to win her ear.

"We won't be long," Bunnie continued, "I promise you. And it would mean a lot to me, for I do so want to go. It would be such a favor!"

Margery sighed and went back to the house. After all, it was not much to do for a friend. She would be back in plenty of time to dress for the party, even though she could not make her toilette quite as daintily painstaking as she had intended. She took her hat and sweater from the little coat-room under the stairs, and peeped into the library half in hopes that her grandfather would forbid her going. He was asleep, however, his handsome head with its white hair cameo-like against the dark green corduroy of the chair cover. With another sigh, Margery went out and climbed into the runabout.

Monroe was the next town, a prosperous little place with good markets, and the road was familiar to her. To-day she found it

even more uninteresting than usual, and she did not enjoy being crowded in the narrow runabout. The only consolation she had was that Harry ran the car quickly and the way seemed unusually short. The bonnet was not ready when they reached Monroe, so Harry and Bunnie decided on visiting the popular little "Peek-Inn" tea-room, while the milliner finished sewing on the trimming and put in the lining.

Margery had already been to the tea-room and thought it a delightful little place with its gray painted walls, and quaint tables and chairs of bright canary yellow, and the framed fashion-plates of long-ago *Godey's Magazines* showing simpering ladies in hoop skirts and pantalettes. But the tea-house to-day had no charms for her. She protested in vain, however, and before she knew it found herself eating ice-cream at one of the little yellow tables, and staring with thoughtful eyes at a bunch of buttercups in a birch-bark basket.

"Only twenty minutes of three now,—I don't believe that hat's ready yet," said Harry, looking at his watch as they rose to go. "Let's go to the movies for half an hour.

They have corking shows here. We'll get you home in plenty of time, Margery. It didn't take us quite twenty minutes to come over."

Margery frowned. She was provoked, and she had a feeling that it was just like Harry's triflingness to have a mother whose hats were not ready on time. Bunnie, too, she saw was making no effort to get back quickly to Renwyck's Town.

"You will get home in plenty of time," Bunnie consoled her. "And with your lovely hair and complexion it doesn't take you long to dress—all that you have to do is to bunch back your curls and wash your face, and step into your frock—and there you are!"

Again Margery frowned. Never had her hair and complexion seemed of less value to her.

"Of course," went on Harry, in a half amused, half contemptuous tone as though he were speaking to a fractious child, "you can walk back to Renwyck's Town if you wish, but I think you'd be wiser if you waited and went back with me in the car."

Bunnie giggled, and Margery's spirit, none

too meek and gentle at the best of times, took fire. Her cheeks blazed with indignation, but she realized that she had no power over the situation, and after all, she decided, Harry would probably get her home in time.

"Very well," she said stiffly, turning toward the moving-picture theatre, "I wouldn't disturb your pleasure for an instant."

The first film consoled her somewhat, for it was a series of pictures of her native city and state, and she sat entranced. Some day, she thought, she would be back there again and there would be no Harry or Bunnie to complicate life for her.

The next reel was not so pleasant, and she sat through a sketch labeled "comic" in which several highly intoxicated gentlemen smashed crockery and upset waiters in innumerable cafés and restaurants. She grew conscious that the hall was dark and close, and began to think again of Polly's party.

"Come on," she whispered to Bunnie next to her. "Let's go."

"Oh—no—the feature is just beginning."

Despairing, Margery sat back, while a typical film melodrama unfolded itself before her

eyes. The plot concerned itself with the adventures of a lovely heroine with youthful cannon curls and round eyes that rolled incessantly, who evidently had as many lives as a cat. She was tied to the connecting-rod of a runaway engine; lost in the desert; dropped from a balloon into a lake; rescued from a burning building; saved from a sinking ship; chased by Indians; captured by the Black Hand, and finally, after a hand-to-hand battle with a gang of pirates, was happily betrothed to the most sturdy and many lived of her lovers, he who had endured many of her little hardships with her.

"Come on," said Harry, toward the end of the love scenes. "This is getting tame. Let's see if that hat is ready yet."

They rose and stumbling over people's feet in the dark made their way out.

"What time is it now, Harry?" asked Margery as the hat in its bandbox was delivered to them and tied on the back of the car. "My watch has stopped."

"Quarter of four," said Harry briefly. "We'll have to beat it."

"Beat it" they did. Margery, not a

nervous or apprehensive person, held her breath in terror as they swept around corners, cut in front of other cars, and finally swung into the long straight road that led to Renwyck's Town.

"We'll be arrested for speeding," shrieked Bunnie, hanging on to her hat with both hands.

"Don't care if we are," shouted back Harry. "Great Scott!"

With a sickening lurch the car skidded on a wet spot in the road, and before they knew what had happened they had crashed into a fence and landed in the ditch beyond.

CHAPTER XVII

MARGERY TRIES THE TELEPHONE

FORTUNATELY, the ditch was shallow and its banks were of a heavy, thick black soil that held the car's wheels firmly and prevented it from overturning.

Being young, their first impulse was to laugh, and they sat still in the car and shouted with mirth. Then Margery, her mind very much on Polly's party, opened the door beside her and standing on the running-board made a flying leap over the edge of the ditch to the grassy bank beyond.

"No damage, is there?" she asked with an apprehensive glance at the wheels.

Harry climbed out and helped Bunnie to alight. "No, there doesn't seem to be anything wrong as far as I can see," he answered after kicking the tires to test them, and inspecting the steering gear. "Can't tell until

we get her out of here,—and that's going to be some job. I'll have to get help."

"Can't we telephone?" suggested Margery. "We can get Walter to come for us."

"The nearest house is the Powells'," Harry answered briefly, "and that's a good mile and a half from here. There's a man over there on the knob harrowing—I'll see if he can help."

Harry made his way across the ditch and over the field, while Bunnie and Margery perched on the fence a little farther down the road where a horse-chestnut spread its shade.

"I just knew something of this kind would happen," groaned Margery.

"Oh, you'll get back before long," consoled Bunnie. "Don't be so nervous. It won't hurt Polly anyway, if everybody doesn't go to her old party."

Margery was silent, too angry to trust herself to speak.

"She might have asked Harry, it seems to me," Bunnie went on. "There's no sense in being so prim and old-maidey. Now, I'm the kind of person who believes in having all the fun you can."

"THERE'S NO SENSE IN BEING SO PRIM"

"I'm sure Polly did perfectly right," declared Margery loyally.

Bunnie shrugged her shoulders and inspected the polish on her finger nails. Margery sat silent, impatiently tapping with her heel against the fence-post. Suddenly, she sprang to the ground. "Where did Harry say that telephone is?" she demanded.

"He didn't say."

"Oh, yes, he did. He said there is a telephone somewhere about."

"Oh, I forgot. He did remark something about there being a 'phone a mile and a half down the road."

"I'm going to walk to it."

Bunnie looked up from her finger nails and laughed. "You had better stay put. You'll never in the world get there! It's funny about me—I suppose I'm different from other people—but I believe in having sense enough to know when you're well off."

"Which direction did Harry say it is in?"

"He didn't say," answered Bunnie again, teasingly this time.

Unable to think of a sufficiently crushing retort, Margery squeezed through the fence

without deigning another word, and hurried along the side of the ditch in search of a place narrow enough for her to jump across. Harry had managed the leap quite easily, but Margery was neither as tall nor as strong and she was hampered by her skirts. As she landed on the opposite side of the ditch, she slipped and fell full length, her right foot in the sticky black mud. With a rueful glance at her new tan pumps she picked herself up, and after scrubbing off the mud as best she could with a handful of rushes, hurried across the field to the knoll where Harry was bargaining, none too good-naturedly, with the plowman for the use of his horses.

"Harry," she called as soon as she was within hailing distance, "how long will it take you to pull out the car?"

"What?"

"How long will it take you to pull out the car?"

"Say it louder. I can't hear you!"

Margery ran forward a few steps. "How—long—will—it—take—you—to—pull—out—the—car?" she shrieked, making a megaphone of her hands.

"Oh, I don't know."

Margery ran forward another yard or two. "Where did you say I could telephone from?"

Harry waved his arm vaguely. "Down the road, at the Powells'. I used to buy pigeons there—and I know they have a 'phone," he shouted, and turned back to his discussion with the man.

She advanced still nearer. "I'm going to go ahead," she announced. "I want to telephone to Polly. You can pick me up when you come along."

"All right," Harry agreed impatiently. The plowman, finding that nobody was hurt, was not eager to take his horses away from their work to put them to pulling out a car which "that young idiot" had carelessly put in a ditch; and Harry's somewhat bumptious manner had not helped his cause.

Not risking another jump across the ditch, Margery followed its side until she found a board laid from bank to bank. Pausing for a moment by the roadside, she waved to Bunnie, still perched on the fence under the tree, before she started off in search of the telephone.

Never did a mile and a half seem longer. She walked too rapidly and a "stitch" came in her side; and she became almost unbearably thirsty. The day, which had been so beautiful earlier, now seemed to her cruelly warm and oppressive. Innumerable automobiles and wagons, all of them driven by strangers and going in the opposite direction, passed her.

"What hot, glaring, dismal things spring days are," she sighed. "How selfish the people are who have carriages and automobiles," she added wrathfully. "Here I am trudging along and not one person thinks of giving me a lift." Realization came to her, and she laughed and sighed, as she considered how often she had passed with scarcely a glance some weary, plodding wayfarer.

"What a difference the point of view does make," she thought. "Oh, joy!" as a turn in the road disclosed a little house tucked away amid some tall old pear trees. "There's the place."

Despite a blister beginning to assert its presence on her heel where her new pumps had rubbed, she hurried along the road until

she reached a weather-beaten gate sagging on its hinges.

"What a forlorn, ill-kept place," she observed to herself disapprovingly as she started up the path leading through the unkempt dooryard to the old brick house, once handsome but now shabby and run-down, chickens roosting on the front porch and bedding hanging from the windows. "I wouldn't allow my home to look like this if I had to work all night to straighten things up."

A yellow dog as unkempt as the dooryard suddenly woke up from a nap on the front steps and rushed at her, barking violently. Margery, usually popular with dogs, held out her hand to him. "Hello, nice fellow," she said soothingly.

The mongrel, evidently more used to blows than to kindness, mistook her outstretched hand for a threat; with a growl he retreated into a clump of bushes, from where, barking furiously, he made spasmodic pretences of rushing out at her.

To the average person there is something especially mortifying in being distrusted by a dog, and the more lowly the animal, the

greater the humiliation. "Oh, be quiet, you silly thing," cried Margery, insulted, and marched up the path with a dignity that tried to be oblivious of yelping little curs.

From the corner of the house, a fat, swarthy woman, with a curly-headed, dirty-faced urchin clinging to her skirts, appeared to investigate the commotion.

"May I use your telephone?" asked Margery politely.

The woman beamed. "No spik Inglis."

"Oh, yes," said Margery blankly. "May I use your telephone?" she added, feeling, as is our charming way with foreigners, that if she only spoke loud enough the woman would understand her.

The woman smiled even more broadly than before. "No spik Inglis," she repeated.

Despairingly, Margery resorted to dumb-show; held an imaginary receiver to her ear and telephoned into the empty air to the great delight of the wide-eyed urchin.

"No spik Inglis," the woman reiterated, shaking her head. The child tugged at her skirt and said something in Italian. She laughed with pleasure and clapped her hands,

and the child darted off to reappear a few minutes later with a boy of about sixteen carrying a hoe, who announced that he spoke English.

Margery stated her mission, and the boy explained volubly that they were Italian fruit growers who had just moved on the place and that they had no telephone, but that she could use the one in the next house down the road to the right. Smiling and nodding her thanks, Margery hurried off, the boy shouting after her the news, which he evidently thought would be welcome, that "bynby, when da business gooda," they too would have a telephone.

The next house proved to be about a hundred yards down the road. Its neat door-yard boasted a red-painted gypsy kettle hung on three poles and planted with daffodils, as well as a dory retired from active service, also painted red and filled with brilliant-hued tulips, all after a once popular country taste.

"Of course, they have a 'phone here," Margery thought with satisfaction as she lifted the heavy brass knocker on the front door and let it fall with a resounding bang.

The sound died away, and Margery stood listening for approaching footsteps within the house. None came and a little apprehensively she lifted the knocker again.

"It would be a nice mess, wouldn't it," she thought nervously, "if nobody's home. Polly will never speak to me again, I know, unless I get to her party in time, or explain to her."

Again, she dropped the knocker; and there was silence. And, still again, she knocked; and yet again. She tried walking across the narrow porch as loudly as she could, and finally, she even rattled the handle of the door.

"I'll have to try the back door," she lamented. "I do hope Harry and Bunnie won't go past while I'm there."

She ran out to the road; there was no one in sight. "Oh, dear," she sighed, and hurried to the back of the house.

This time her efforts were rewarded; there was the sound of rapid footsteps and a girl of about her own age, clad in a pale pink kimono which she clutched together at the throat, appeared at the door.

"Whatever is the matter?" demanded the girl. "I was asleep," she added accusingly, putting her hand to her front hair, which had been wrapped on whalebone curlers and stood out from her head like horns.

"May I use your telephone?" asked Margery, fairly babbling in her eagerness. "The automobile I was in fell into the ditch—and I want to telephone to my friend who was expecting me at a tennis party at the club. They told me up the road that you had a 'phone."

"You can't 'phone to-day," answered the girl with a yawn.

"W-Why?" cried Margery.

"'Phone's out of order."

"Oh!"

"Yes, it got busted yesterday," explained the girl with another yawn.

"But mayn't I try it? Perhaps it has been fixed without your knowing it."

"I don't believe it has."

"But they might have fixed the wires outside the house—and—and you might not have known it. Mayn't I try?—it's very important."

The girl stood aside from the doorway. "Well, you can come in," she said rather ungraciously. "I was sound asleep, and I have to speak a piece at the Baptist Church tonight." She led the way into a comfortable, homelike sitting-room, and pointed to a telephone hanging on the wall. "It's the old-fashioned kind—you have to turn the handle on the side of the box there."

Margery took down the receiver, and seizing the handle whirled it violently as though she had been grinding a coffee-mill.

"Hello! Hello!" she cried into the mouthpiece.

The telephone was unresponsive.

Margery ground again; but no voice from central inquired "number, please."

"They won't answer," complained Margery, turning to the yawning girl, who was perched on the arm of a chair beside her.

"I told you the 'phone was out of order. Who did you say you were with when the car upset? Anybody hurt?"

"No, nobody was hurt. I was with Harry Richards and Miss Morris."

"Oh, Harry Richards," answered the girl

with a little more animation. "I know him. My name's Minnie Powell. He used to come here to buy pigeons from my brother. He's a queer one—he always stares as though he had never seen a girl before."

Margery whirled the telephone handle again. "Well, it's no use," she sighed, hanging up the receiver. "Is there any one else near here who has a telephone?"

"The Durhams—they live about half a mile down the road. But I don't believe that they are home. Everybody has gone to old Mr. Ashton's funeral. All our folks have gone, too, but I stayed home because I wanted to rest up for the sociable to-night. How did that upset happen?" she added, more awake now, and anxious not to miss any excitement.

Margery explained as briefly as she could, and with a final word of apology and thanks, hurried off to the Durhams'. As she scurried along beside the road she often turned back to see if Harry and Bunnie were coming. "I hope they didn't pass—surely they would have sense enough to come into the Powells' to see if I were there."

As the girl had predicted, the Durhams were

away from home, and after she had knocked loudly and futilely at the front and back doors, Margery retreated to the horse-block in front of the gate to sit there and wait for the others. They did not appear, and she became the victim of nervous fears. It was ages, she fretted, since the car had gone into the ditch. No doubt it had passed while she was in the Powells' house. It would be just like Harry and Bunnie to sail past without giving her a single thought. Well, if she ever reached home she never would go anywhere with anybody—no matter how much she was urged. And as for Polly!—Margery simply could not bear to think of Polly's disappointment and displeasure. With all her sweetness and sympathy Polly was quick-tempered and proud, and not one to overlook an apparent slight. Margery brushed her eyes with the back of her hand and sighed dismally.

And then the fun she was missing! She wanted so much to see the tennis match, for the games were certain to be well-played and exciting, and she had hoped to see Dick defeat a certain proficient Rob Bailey, whom she and Polly considered especially odious.

She thought of herself as she should have been at that hour; dainty in the new batiste and the becoming big black hat, happy and gay, the center of an admiring group of boys and girls; while across the green courts the sun shone on the river, and on the sails of the darting small boats, and perhaps on the guns of some great man-o'-war passing slowly out to sea. In bitterness she contrasted that picture with the dreary stretch of road before her, and herself, tired and disheveled, with a blistered heel and aching head, sitting forlornly on the horse-block, stared at by passing motorists and once jeered at by a crowd of men on a truck.

At last, just as she meditated a despairing attempt to walk to Renwyck's Town, or at least in its direction, Harry's little car hove in sight.

"Did you 'phone?" asked Bunnie as Margery climbed into the automobile and sank down into the limited amount of space allowed her.

"No," answered Margery wearily. "They were all out and the telephone wouldn't work."

"We were an age getting the car out of the

ditch," explained Harry. "It took two horses —and it cost me five dollars. Then Bunnie was so tired sitting there on the fence that we had to turn round and go back to Monroe to get the lady an ice-cream soda."

"And Margery," interrupted Bunnie gayly, "while we were there we met Mrs. McClellan, a friend of Harry's mother, and she asked us in. She had some boys and girls there—and we danced. Oh, we had such fun! You ought to have been there!"

Margery was silent. Bunnie's serene disregard of every one but herself shocked her, quite impersonally and apart from her own feelings. She was bitterly resentful, too, of the way Harry had carelessly left her to shift for herself, while he danced and enjoyed himself at Monroe. She sat back, staring straight ahead of her at the road, not uttering a word, and growing more angry with every mile.

The strain, the disappointment and the annoyance made her head ache, and it was a very white and tired Margery, who, at thirty-five minutes past six, climbed out of the runabout and ran up the steps of the White House Farm.

"Margery," called her grandfather from the library, "come here."

Margery hurried across the hall and stood in the doorway. "Yes, Grandpapa," she said breathlessly.

"You have not been to Polly's party, I believe."

Margery shook her head.

"Polly telephoned for you several times. This is the first day she has been out, I understand, and as she has not been well, I understand also that you were to assist her with her guests. She seems to have been depending on you—but Sarah told her you had gone away with Elizabeth Morris and Harry Richards."

"Yes—oh, Grandpapa—I—we—Bunnie and Harry and I—we went to Monroe—and the car ran into a ditch and had a puncture. And Harry had to get his mother's new hat, and we had ice-cream and the movies were so long and ——"

"You told me at luncheon that you were going to Polly's party. But that will do now. You may go up-stairs and get yourself ready for dinner. It will be ready in a few minutes." With a sigh Mr. Morris turned

back to his book, and Margery stumbled up the stairs to her room.

There on the bed lay her pretty blue gown all ready to wear, and beside it, Sarah had placed her new black hat with the pink roses, and her best black silk stockings and patent leather pumps. "Oh, dear," sighed Margery. "Oh, dear."

Dinner was a somewhat strained meal and Margery was glad when it was over and she could slip out to the terrace. It was a soft, clear spring evening, the leaves of the trees were still tenderly green, and down in the garden the lilacs were tossing their purple plumes. Waldo slipped his muzzle into her hand and together they walked up and down. Her grandfather came out through the long French window and drawing her arm through his walked up and down with her.

For a time he said nothing, beyond an occasional comment on the beauty of the evening, and the lights of Renwyck's Town slowly appearing one by one.

"Margery," he cleared his throat, "Margery, I should hate to think that my little girl was deceiving me in any way. I want

you to have all the fun that any one possibly could. But I don't like your running over the country in this fashion with a young boy and another girl, and no older person. In fact, I forbid it absolutely. And there must be an end to this intimacy with Harry Richards. He is a foolish, idle, spendthrift boy, acting in anything but a manly way toward his widowed mother. Dick and Sam are splendid, manly boys that I am glad for you to know—but not Harry. Mr. Morris was here this afternoon. He was speaking of this friendship of yours and Bunnie's with Harry, and he gave me to understand that Bunnie endures it solely on your account."

Margery gasped. "Why, Grandpapa—I stand Harry only for Bunnie's sake—I detest him! I wish he'd never been born! I'm only trying to help Bunnie——" With a long wail that made her grandfather smile in spite of himself, she ran into the house and up to her room. There, tired and overwrought, she threw herself on the window-seat and gave way to a most heartfelt and satisfying sobbing.

Sarah came in to arrange the bed for the

night and paused astonished. "Oh, Miss Margery—whatever is the matter? Is anything wrong?"

"Oh, no, Sarah. It's—it's just that I'm—a mascot."

Sarah was puzzled; a mascot was something new to her experience, while Margery's attack of grippe was still fresh in her mind. Putting her hand on Margery's forehead, she said soothingly—Sarah believed in being soothing to invalids under all provocations—"Oh, no, Miss Margery, it can't be as bad as that—it's a little nervous ye are. Come, let Sarah help ye to bed, an' then we'll be gettin' the doctor to give ye some nice medicine for it—an' maybe we'll be gettin' Miss Tucker back. Ye haven't a touch of fever—maybe ye're not a mascot at all! Stick out yer tongue an' let me see."

CHAPTER XVIII

EXPLANATIONS

MARGERY'S first thought the next morning was to telephone to Polly, and explain as best she could the incident of the preceding day.

Hannah, the maid who answered the 'phone, told her that Polly was still asleep, and to call later. At twelve she called again, only to find that Polly had gone with her parents to spend the day with some friends out in the country. "Miss Polly," Hannah stated, "done survived de pahty so well, an' her cold's so much bettah, dat dey's decided ter risk an outin'."

Disappointed, Margery went back to her letters. Her head had ached enough to make an excuse for staying home from church, and she had spent the morning in the garden by the tall lilac bushes writing to her mother and her former schoolmates.

In the afternoon, Harry Richards stopped

at the house. He did not come in but left instead one of the big boxes of candy that had been the tribute to Bunnie exclusively hitherto, with a note of apology penciled on the top. Margery showed the note and the candy to her grandfather. He made no comment beyond :

"You're a little young to begin to accept candy and flowers and that sort of thing from young men. Keep your friendships on the simple basis that they are with Dick and Sam."

The afternoon and evening wore on intolerably. Margery wished that she could go out to the Morris farm and have a good long comforting talk with Deborah, but she knew that involved seeing Bunnie, and Mr. Morris, who disconcerted her, and perhaps facing some teasing from Dick. She thought of sitting down by her grandfather, and confiding in him her hopes and schemes of aiding the world and the difficulties into which they seemed to have brought her. But a childish fear of being laughed at, or of having her confidences made the basis of an improving lecture, held her back. Instead, she suggested to

her grandfather that she read to him, and at his pleased assent, plowed heroically through "Synthetic Philosophy" while Mr. Morris rested his tired eyes to the point of nodding.

On Monday morning Margery woke in an unusual state of depression and lowly mindedness. The occurrences of Saturday seemed blacker than ever, and no repentant sinner ever made more humble confession than did Margery in the imaginary speeches she rehearsed on the way to school. Polly, she pictured as cold and haughty, as she herself would very likely have been under the circumstances, with a dignity that was positively regal. Meekly, she felt that this would be no more than she deserved, but her genuine desire to win Polly's forgiveness led her to devise methods of approach which to Margery, direct and straightforward as she was, unused to the devious ways of diplomacy, seemed masterpieces of stratagem. In her mind's eye she saw herself chatting with Sally or some of the girls in the schoolroom; Polly would enter, say "Good-morning," with paralyzing formality, and Margery would begin, "Polly, I tried to phonograph you yesterday—I—I—

mean telegraph you," purposely designed slips of the tongue that would send the other girls into shrieks of laughter and bring a reluctant smile to the corners of Polly's mouth. Then, having gained the attention of the judge, the criminal would make full confession of her weakness in having allowed herself to be carried off by Bunnie and Harry, her grief and indignation at the delays and, finally, should Polly still prove unyielding, a moving story of her weary walk in search of a telephone, her encounter with the Italian woman and the girl at the Powells', and her blistered heel. Warm-hearted Polly, she felt, would never be able to withstand this final tale of misery, and there would be an instant reconciliation. As a final seal to the restored friendship she would hand Harry's box of candy to Polly with the plea that it be passed around among the girls, as she "never wanted to see the stuff again." In the afternoon she and Polly would have a long talk in a shady corner of the garden, and she would tell the whole long pathetic story of her attempts at mascoting. She felt the time had come for her to be entirely frank.

These plans she alternated with a hope, too rosy to be more than a passing dream, that Polly would not be offended at all, but altogether understanding and indulgent.

"Well, anyway," she remarked to herself with assumed confidence, as she turned into the school gate, "Polly is awfully high-spirited and sensitive, but she is a dear. And if you just treat those quick-tempered, proud people with tact, you have no trouble."

She pushed open the door of the cloak-room and entered. "Hello," she said casually to a group of girls clustered about the mirror, evidently deep in some earnest discussion. "Hello," replied one or two of them rather waveringly, their eyes on some one who had just entered the room back of her.

Margery turned and faced Polly; not Polly as she had imagined her, august and dignified and apparently indifferent, but Polly humanly and frankly hurt and indignant. "Well,—Margery Morris," she began, her head up like that of a war-horse scenting battle, the very scarlet bow on the end of her pigtail quivering with resentment, "I should think that you would be ashamed to see me!"

Margery opened her lips, gasped, and for the lack of something to say closed them again. Crushed by the sense of her own unworthiness she turned crimson and her head drooped.

Polly sailed on. "Yes, I should think that you would blush! I think that it was too mean for anything! After you had promised me, and promised me to be there early—you knew I'd been ill—for you not only not to come early, but never to come at all——"

"I—I—tried to telephone," interrupted Margery courageously. "I had a blister on my heel and ——"

"Hannah told me you tried to telephone yesterday," Polly admitted, somewhat mollified. Then, seized by the memory of her wrongs she rushed on, "But telephoning didn't alter the case—you broke your promise to be there and help me! And you know that you're always talking about a promise being sacred! Of course, I don't want anybody to come to my parties who doesn't want to do it. If you had refused at first I shouldn't have minded at all. It was just that you made such a fuss about wanting to

come, and promising to come early and help me—and then on top of that you sailed off to the moving-pictures and the tea-room,—a thing you can do any day. I don't mind telling you that I'm awfully hurt."

Really distressed, Margery's presence of mind forsook her. With a glance at the other girls plainly listening, she made a faltering attempt to deliver her prepared speech, and began, of course, at the wrong end.

"Won't—won't you have some of the candy Harry sent me?" she blundered. "I want to get rid of the old stuff."

A tactful invitation that added the last fuel to the fire of Polly's wrath. "And you're not even sorry!" she cried. With a snort of indignation that was close to tears, she left the room.

Feeling as though the roof had crashed down on her head, Margery turned to the other girls. Plainly, from their expressions, popular sympathy was not with her.

"I—I," she began limply, "I didn't think Polly'd take it that way."

Pretty, fly-away Sally Watson, perched on the radiator, swung her heels and laughed.

"Grr," she shuddered in affected fright, "such scenes are hard on my nerves. But really, Margery, you were a goose not to have come to Polly's party. I'm sure you can't have had half so good a time in Monroe. I never had so much fun in my life!"

Elinor Joyner added seriously, "It was too bad of you, Margery. I don't blame Polly a bit. She isn't entirely well yet, either. Even if you didn't want to go to her party you could have arranged things differently."

"But I did want to go!" cried Margery, exasperated. "We—we upset in the ditch, or else I would have been back in plenty of time! I tried to telephone right then and there, but the Powells' telephone was out of order. I wanted to explain all this to Polly, but she wouldn't let me."

Sally laughed again; tried to whistle, and could not because she laughed so much. "Now, Margery," she remonstrated, "don't try any tales about ditches, when Harry and Bunnie were telling it round that very evening what lots of fun you had in Monroe, and all about dancing at Mrs. Thing-um-a-bob's, and everything." Sally paused for a half-

second, then went on with unaccustomed seriousness, "Really, Margery, Polly's a perfect dear—but you do have to be careful about not hurting her feelings. Bother! There's the bell!"

As they flocked into the assembly room for morning prayers, Margery made another attempt to clear herself. Sally, at least, should know that while Harry and Bunnie were dancing in Monroe, she herself was sitting forlornly on a horse-block, miles from anywhere, with a blistered heel and an aching head and heart, stared at and jeered at by passing motorists, waiting for the irresponsible dancers to come along and pick her up. But Teacher Rachel promptly tapped her on the arm and told her that she would have to stay in during recess for speaking after the bell had rung.

Margery's mind was plainly not on her lessons that morning, and she announced dreamily that the Ode to an Idiot Boy had been written by Cicero, and that Marie Antoinette had been beheaded by Henry the Eighth; a species of absent-mindedness that convulsed her classmates, annoyed Teacher

Rachel, and finally led to her being kept in for fifteen minutes after school.

Recess period she spent in solitary grandeur in the principal's office, where she composed further speeches to Polly, and one to Bunnie in which she humbled her pride and asked her to explain to Polly the true state of affairs. A moment alone on the stairs with Bunnie, between classes, enabled her to make her plea.

Bunnie was polite but indifferent. "Oh," she said easily, "you didn't manage Polly well! She was all right with me. But of course, I'm the kind of a person that believes in using tact, and I jollied her along. Even if she does flare up a little, you ought not to get excited about that. You're too touchy. It's funny about me—I guess I must be different from other people—but I'm always able to take things as they come."

Margery was silent. There really seemed nothing to say. Repeating to herself the proverb that we can be brave over the toothaches of the whole world, unless our own teeth happen to ache, she drifted down the stairs.

During study period she recklessly tried to

pass a note to Polly which Teacher Rachel spied and ordered her to put into the scrap-basket, while fifteen minutes were added to the time Margery was to be kept in after school. This final calamity turned the scale; from feeling herself to be a criminal, Margery changed to considering herself a martyr. Here she was, she argued, just because of Polly's hot temper and unreasonableness, forced to spend her whole recess in the office, and to stay in half an hour after school. It was very unjust, and she was being badly treated. Harry and Bunnie had been careless and selfish, but after all she thought that they were not a bit worse than Polly.

"At least, they were not so horrid and rude," she declared wrathfully. Polly's indignant speech of the morning, which she had taken at the time in a spirit of submission, began to rankle, and she composed a number of biting and brilliant speeches to take the place of those she had rehearsed earlier in the day.

The final bell rang for the dismissal of school, and the boys and girls filed out into the hall. Polly, in hopes that Margery would

make a move toward a reconciliation, lingered near the door. She already regretted her outburst of the morning, and had Margery attempted an apology then she would have met her half-way. But she felt it due to her dignity not to make the first advance. It is a lamentable fact that most people would rather be dignified than happy. And so she hung back, waiting, while Margery, never dreaming that a word of hers would be listened to, gathered her books together in preparation for another session in the office. When she emerged Polly had gone home to luncheon.

CHAPTER XIX

TRIALS

SCHOOL-DAYS, we are told, are the happiest and the most care-free in life. They are a favorite theme with the writers of popular songs, and rare indeed is the public speaker who cannot wax sentimental over the halcyon days when he was a lad at school. Yet school-days are as full of perplexities, heart-aches, and injustices as any other state of existence, and these must be met, not by the experienced, backed up by a lifetime of knowledge and training, but by the novice in the art of living. Nor can these trials be dismissed with the thought that they are only trifles and that the sufferers are only children; for little things often affect our whole lives, and as a teacup can be as full as a bucket, so can youth suffer as keenly as age.

If, at the end of the week following Polly's party, Margery had been asked her opinion

of school-days she would have declared them to be the most miserable time imaginable, and herself the most unhappy schoolgirl alive. The misunderstanding with Polly had developed over night into an open quarrel, and the two girls passed each other without speaking and with cold and averted looks. The fact that they were really fond of each other made them more bitter and more haughty.

The estrangement might have passed over after a day or two, had not the other girls in the class taken an interest in it, carried opinions backwards and forwards between the two principals and repeated remarks that, often harmless enough in themselves, sounded quite different when said with another emphasis and without their context.

Polly was very popular, and she had been an acknowledged leader since her kindergarten days, while Margery was a comparative stranger to them, and on their first acquaintance with her she had been suspected of being affected and "stuck up." Moreover, poor Margery had been put in a position where she seemed to be wholly in the wrong, selfish and indifferent to her promise to Polly, and their

generous young sympathies rushed to the side of the girl whom they considered the injured one. Accordingly, Margery found herself ostracized.

"Thank goodness," she sighed, as she stopped at Miss Patty's on Saturday morning for her music lesson, "that there's no school to-day, and I won't have to face those horrid, horrid girls," and she gave the bell a vindictive pull.

Miss Patty's big brawny Irish maid, who seemed too large for the quaint little house, opened the door. "Miss Patty is nervous and upset," she announced. "She won't be able to give yer any lesson this mornin'. I was ter go out an' telephone yer, but the milkman came for his money and I didn't get it done."

"I wonder," thought Margery, as she turned away, "what can be the matter with Miss Patty?"

She was not long in finding out. After church the next morning, Mrs. Jameson stopped her as she was passing out of the door with the rest of the congregation. "Are you in a hurry, Margery?" she asked. "I see your grandfather has gone into the vestry to

speak to the rector, so perhaps you can spare me a few minutes."

Wondering, Margery allowed herself to be led down the path to the quaint old graveyard. She had noted that Polly was not at church that morning, and with a sudden upsurging of hope she guessed that Mrs. Jameson was going to try to bring about a reconciliation. Her first impulse was of pleasure and relief, her second to hold back, for she told herself that Polly had been unjust and harsh and that it would be a long time before she would forgive her.

She was not prepared for what Mrs. Jameson did have to say. "Margery," Mrs. Jameson began, "what is all this about Miss Patty?"

"Why—why—I don't know. How do you mean?"

"I mean about Miss Patty and Dr. Huston. Yesterday afternoon, Miss Patty came to see me very unhappy and upset. She is engaged—has been engaged for a long time—to a distant cousin of mine, Duncan Patterson, who lives in Boston now, although he comes from here. Because Miss Patty feels that she cannot leave her bedridden grandmother, the

wedding has been postponed—too often, I think. At times, I fancy, Duncan has grown rather impatient. Then, somehow, from some one here, he heard that Miss Patty was engaged to Dr. Huston. Evidently there has been a good deal of unhappiness over it, and Miss Patty has been very much upset. Poor soul, she has been on a long nervous strain, and it can't be wondered at. But where I feel especially bad is that she said the gossip had started at Polly's party. Somebody there had said that Mrs. Stenton had said that you had said that Miss Patty had told you that she was engaged to Dr. Huston."

"Why—I never said that, Mrs. Jameson! Truly I didn't."

As rapidly as she could Margery sketched the meeting with Mrs. Stenton, and her own share in the conversation. "I didn't say those things, Mrs. Jameson—Mrs. Stenton just seemed to say them for me."

Mrs. Jameson laughed in spite of herself at Margery's woebegone face. "Mrs. Stenton has a little way of saying things for people," she observed. "But it shows how careful we ought to be; remember the old verse:

" 'If wisdom's ways you wisely seek,
Five things observe with care.
Of whom you speak, to whom you speak,
And how, and when, and where.' "

"Yes," sighed Margery dolefully, "I think it would be better if I never spoke at all."

"There's a little story I often tell Polly," Mrs. Jameson continued, bent on improving the occasion. "There was once a woman who went to the Catholic priest to confess having repeated a piece of gossip about a neighbor. The priest told her to go and gather a lot of thistle blooms and scatter them to the four winds, and then to return to him. When she had done this the priest told her to go and gather up all the thistle-down she had scattered. 'But I can't do that,' the woman said; 'some of it has blown so far that I never could get it.' 'The gossip you have scattered is like the thistle-down,' answered the priest. 'Until you can gather up every unkind word you have spread you cannot undo the harm you have done.' You see, dear, how careful we all have to be. But it may come out all right about Miss Patty, so don't worry."

Margery sighed; it was so hard, she thought, trying to make Mrs. Jameson understand.

She was genuinely distressed that she should have been in any way responsible for bringing the tears to Miss Patty's dear patient eyes, and all during the ride home and at dinner she concocted innumerable plans for straightening things out. She even sat down at her desk and pulling out a sheet of her best paper began, "My dear Mr. ——" A heavy blot of ink fell where the name Patterson should have been. With an involuntary smile Margery read out the inscription as it stood: "'My dear Mr.—Blot.' That's what you are; an old Mr. Blot. A blot on the landscape to go and get so jealous and horrid, and make everybody unhappy."

She added feet, arms and head to the inky spot, and labeled it "Mr. Duncan Patterson." Then, her feelings relieved, she would not write to him to-day, after all. Perhaps if she did she would only make matters worse. Putting aside her pen, she went down-stairs.

Waldo was asleep in the hall. In her depressed state of mind Margery found the so-

ciety of the dog very comforting. "You dear old thing," she said as she bent to pat his head. "You don't scold me, or laugh at me, or get mad at me, or do anything but just love me." Waking, Waldo thumped his tail against the floor, and put a heavy paw playfully on her arm. "Yes, you're a perfect dear! You shall have some sugar for being so nice." There was lump sugar in the dining-room on the sideboard, and she took a handful. "Now beg."

She was balancing a lump on Waldo's nose when she heard the sound of wheels and glancing through the open door, saw Harry coming up the driveway in his car.

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed. "What shall I do?" Abandoning the sugar and Waldo she ran to the coat cupboard under the stairs and pulled the door to after her.

This time Harry did not merely leave some trifle, but he demanded to see her, and she nearly suffocated in her close little den while Katie searched the house for her. At length she heard Harry's noisy little runabout depart, and she emerged from her lair, feeling very undignified and disheveled.

"Was that Harry?" her grandfather called from the library.

Margery nodded, and tucked back a lock that had caught on one of the cupboard hooks. "Yes, it was Harry," she answered.

"You must not allow him to call here, dear."

Margery tried to explain. "But I don't want ——"

"That will do, Margery. I have told you before that I don't approve of that young man. There's the telephone—run and answer it, dear."

But escaping Harry was not always so easy. Through the coolness with the other girls at school, Margery was forced even more into Bunnie's society than she had been before. And wherever Bunnie was, there of course Harry was also, although of late he had talked more to Margery than either she or Bunnie found agreeable. Bunnie indeed had become very cool in her manner and more than once made cutting speeches that Margery felt to be the final injustice of all.

As a result Margery stayed more at home, digging in the garden or taking long rides with her grandfather through the pleasant

countryside, lovely now with its flowering horse-chestnuts, and daisy-filled fields.

She still felt bitterly disappointed over the delay in her parents' home-coming, and there were times when the strain at school wore on her particularly and she longed to sob out on her mother's shoulder the whole history of her many trials and difficulties. Dick had taken his examinations for the prize, so he came less often to the house, and Margery missed his cheering presence which had come to be the only bright spot in her intercourse with the boys and girls of Renwyck's Town. She grew paler and thinner, and even chocolate cake failed so completely to interest her that Sarah held several anxious consultations with Mr. Morris.

Harry took to calling almost every afternoon, but Margery usually happened to be out, and once or twice she saw him coming and managed to make her escape.

"I wish that Harry were as persistent in the big worth-while things," she sighed one afternoon as she came back from a long ride, "as he is in pestering me."

When she came out of school the next day,

hurrying through the gate in order to avoid the other girls, Harry stopped her.

"What's the matter, Margery?" he asked. "Aren't you home any more?"

Margery blushed and felt very uncomfortable. "I'm—oh, I'm—very busy, now."

"Oh!" said Harry.

But Margery had too direct and honest a nature to go on offering evasions. Her face on fire, she bravely met the situation. "I'm —I'm sorry, Harry," she said simply, "but Grandpapa doesn't like me to have you at the house, until—well, until you turn over a new leaf. You see," she went on courageously, "you are idle and rather extravagant. And really, Harry," she added with the little womanly air that had come to her of late, "it scarcely is acting properly to your mother. You know the reason she isn't well is because she is worried. You could be fine—if you wanted to be."

Harry flushed and ran his finger thoughtfully around the steering wheel. "When a fellow gets kicked out of school," he muttered, "he doesn't feel so much like trying."

"But you could try, Harry."

"Yes—and fail."

Failure was a poor argument with which to convince Margery. "You don't have to fail, unless you want to," she said stoutly. "I—you"—she sought for the right thing to say—"I'd fight until I couldn't stand up, rather than fail," she went on.

Harry looked at her thoughtfully. "I believe you would."

"And then, Harry," she cried, warming up to her subject, "don't you remember John Paul Jones, when he was almost defeated, and how he said 'I haven't begun to fight'?"

"That's so," said Harry.

Margery glanced at the town clock. "I'll have to run now," she said, "or I'll be late to luncheon. Good-bye."

Out on the country road, Margery took off her hat and fanned her cheeks.

"Life's a very complicated thing," she remarked to an old sheep looking at her through the bars of the fence. "I wish that there were rules you could learn by heart—like the rules in mathematics—that would always tell you exactly what to do."

"Baaa," said the sheep.

CHAPTER XX

"THE HARM YOU HAVE DONE"

"CAN'T you come out this afternoon, Bunnie?" Margery asked one rainy day at the end of school.

"I have an engagement," Bunnie answered briefly.

"Oh, can't you break it?" Margery urged. She was feeling depressed and dreaded a long rainy afternoon by herself.

"I'm the kind of person that doesn't break engagements," Bunnie answered loftily. "I don't go to Monroe when my friends are giving parties."

Margery turned, her spirit roused. "Why, Bunnie! You of all people to say that to me ——" she began hotly, when her eye fell on a paper lying by a pile of chairs in a corner of the cloak room.

It was in Polly's writing and with a start

Margery wondered if it could possibly be the carefully prepared term essay, the loss of which she had heard Polly bewailing. Polly had torn up her rough draft and the losing of the perfected copy meant that a whole month's work would have to be done over.

Margery stooped and picked up the paper. It was Polly's essay; dirty and mussed, but still complete. For a moment temptation assailed her. If she threw the paper back where she found it, Polly would probably have all her work to do over again; and it would serve her right. Then her own honorable nature asserted itself, and without stopping to finish her conversation with Bunnie, she ran swiftly out of the room up the stairs to Polly's desk.

As she raised the desk-lid to put in the paper, Polly appeared at the doorway, amazement written on her face.

Margery flushed. "I—I——" she stammered.

Polly raised her eyebrows.

Margery's lips quivered. "I found your essay," she said as soon as she could speak, "under the pile of chairs in the cloak room.

I thought you might want it." Putting down the desk-lid she walked quietly out of the room.

Polly said nothing to her the next morning nor made any sign of recognition, but as she opened her desk, Margery discovered that some one had sharpened her pencils for her, long, beautiful points that she never could have achieved for herself. Margery always sharpened and sharpened until she had nothing but a pathetic stub of pencil left, with a blunt point after all. Her attempts at pencil sharpening were a favorite joke among the other girls. The next day the pencils had been sharpened again and the next, although not until long afterward did she find out who had done them.

Margery was too absorbed in her own affairs to think much about Dick's success with the examination, but Mr. Morris was eager to know how his favorite had fared. He asked Margery so many times if she had heard the results of the competition, that it was scarcely a coincidence that he happened to be speaking of it one afternoon just as Margery spied Dick and Sam turning in at the gate.

She ran to the front door and stood waiting as the two boys come up the driveway, Sam rolling along in the absurd imitation of a sailor's gait that he adopted of late in anticipation of going to Annapolis. Dick waved a newspaper over his head, and hurried across the grass, while Sam remained in the driveway to dance what he fondly imagined was a sailors' hornpipe, but which was really a combination of Highland fling and the æsthetic posturing taught at young ladies' boarding-schools.

"I've got it!" Dick shouted. "It's announced in the *Star-beam*, too. See, here it is! I've won it, and it's all due to you, Mr. Morris. And you've been a brick, Margery."

Margery seized him by both hands and in the fulness of her joy capered around him, "like an excited puppy," her grandfather informed her.

"That's fine, my boy." Mr. Morris beamed. "I can't tell you how glad I am. I shall have to call on your grandfather tomorrow and congratulate him."

The next afternoon when her grandfather went over to the Morris farm, Margery went

with him to have a little chat with Deborah and Bunnie.

"Well, dear," Deborah smiled at her, "isn't the news fine? I'm so glad for Dick's sake. And his grandfather is so proud of him,—it's really comical to see it! And Dick says you and your grandfather helped him. That's —— Yes, Thomas, what is it? Oh, dear, the butcher. Well, Margery, I'll have to go out and talk to him about last Sunday's roast. It was as tough as tough, and I was so disgusted. Bunnie is up-stairs."

Margery found Bunnie in her room, busily cutting out a shirt-waist. Bunnie sewed rather well, with that capability which did something to redeem other qualities that were not so pleasing.

She did not seem particularly pleased to see Margery and went on with her sewing, her head bent low and her eyes obstinately fixed on her needle.

"What's that you're making?" asked Margery in an effort to clear away a somewhat awkward silence.

"Blouse."

"I wish I could sew like that."

"Do you?"

"I can darn and mend very well, but I'm not much good at cutting out."

"Aren't you?"

"Isn't it fine about Dick?"

"Yes."

There was a long pause. Bunnie sat bent over her sewing while Margery leaned against the window, watching an excitable hen leading her brood across the grass, and wondering what was the matter with Bunnie. This new silence puzzled her.

With a sudden decision she turned away from the window. "Bunnie," she asked, "what is the matter with you?"

"How?" asked Bunnie, without looking up.

"You scarcely speak to me—and you've been acting queerly to me lately, you know you have."

Bunnie, cornered, raised her eyes. "If you're too good for my friends, you're too good for me. I'm the kind of a person that's loyal to my friends. You won't let Harry even be seen with you."

Margery turned again to the window, her cheeks scarlet. She felt indignant and in-

sulted. In spite of her little air of elegance, and her self-possessed manner, she really was very unsuspicious and simple-minded. To-day for the first time she realized that Bunnie had tolerated her because she found her useful, and that with an egoist like Bunnie, what is no longer useful is no longer interesting.

"Bunnie," she said, crossing the room, and standing beside the other girl, "I see it all. You didn't care a bit about my friendship. You just wanted an excuse for meeting Harry. And now that I can't see Harry, I'm not useful to you any more. You've done nothing but make unhappiness in my life. I tried to help you because I thought you wanted a friend. But you've made trouble between me and Polly, and you've brought me lots of scoldings and misunderstandings. If you were a nice girl you'd have explained to Polly how it was that I went to Monroe that day, and you'd have tried to make things straight. And, too, you'd have used your influence with Harry for the good, instead of leading him on to be more trifling than ever. I hope that some day you may see a light, and try to undo the harm you've done."

Her long speech finished she picked up her sweater and ran from the room.

Mr. Morris had evidently enjoyed his call on Dick's grandfather.

"Henry Morris is a very interesting talker," he told Margery on the way home. "He's a queer, cantankerous fellow, is Henry, but he is a well-informed one."

"How does Mr. Morris feel about Dick?"

"Oh, delighted, delighted. He's the proudest man I ever saw. Willing to give the boy anything he wants now, nothing too good for him. In his eyes it's the most wonderful prize that ever was won. It's amusing, and yet it's touching too.

"It just shows, Margery," he added, "what a girl can do to help this old world along."

"Oh!" groaned Margery, her mind still on Bunnie.

That night, long after the others of the household were asleep, Margery suddenly sat up in bed and switching on the light, began a note to Mrs. Endicott, imploring her to take her away. She was miserable and unhappy in Renwyck's Town, she declared; the boys and girls, especially the girls, were horrid,

and the only thing that could make life tolerable to her was to go away at once. She would die or go mad, she knew she would, if she were left any longer in a town so dreadful; and Aunt Kate, she hoped, would not want to be responsible for anything as tragic as Margery's death in the flower of her youth.

"There," she said, as she ripped the sheet of paper from the pad and getting up tucked it away in her desk, "it's no use mailing this until Aunt Kate gets back to Philadelphia. I don't know exactly where she is just now.

"I wonder," she paused with her hand on the light, "if it does seem like running away —not very John Paul Jones-y. But, oh, dear, I can't help it—I'm so tired and sick of everything." She skipped back into bed and cuddled down under the covers. "It *is* running away, I'm afraid—being beaten. I wonder," she thought, as she drifted off to sleep, "if anything will happen to make me change my mind."

CHAPTER XXI

SAM TAKES A HAND

MARGERY, waiting at the druggist's for a prescription to be filled, whirled around impatiently on the high revolving stool as though to escape from her own harassing thoughts.

"It's all a horrid mix-up and mess! I never, never shall try to do anything for any one again!" she declared to herself, scowling at the tips of her tan oxfords. "It simply doesn't work. Hereafter I shall live for myself alone." Her lips trembled a little; "living for myself alone" sounded rather dreary. "I shall be a pig," with a vindictive whirl of the stool, "an absolute pig! And," remembering a phrase she had heard applied to an acquaintance of her mother's, "a cold, hard, disappointed woman of the world."

She whirled around on the stool again and

stared at her reflection in the long glass over the soda-water fountain, striving to assume the expression proper to one who was at the some time both an absolute pig and a cold, proud woman of the world. It was not a success, and in spite of herself, she smiled.

"Hello, Margery—what are you looking so cheerful over?" demanded a voice at her elbow.

Margery turned. "Oh, hello, Sam," she said.

Sam regarded her with as much sternness as his cherubic countenance could assume. Margery, he felt, had no right to look so debonair. He had just been talking to Polly over the garden fence, and she had seemed strangely upset and unlike herself at a casual mention of Margery's name. Ever since he was four and had asked Santa Claus for a gun in order to shoot all the bears in the world, lest Polly, aged three, be made uneasy by their existence, Sam had been gallantly trying to take care of Polly, as much as that independent young person would allow herself to be taken care of. Aware that something was wrong between the two girls and having heard school

gossip which put the blame squarely on Margery, Sam, who seldom looked before he leaped, but leaped first with remarkable agility and energy and looked afterward with horror and amazement, decided to interfere and set things straight.

His meeting with Margery had occurred before he had had time to think over his resolution, and spurred on by what he considered her misplaced cheerfulness, he rushed in.

"See here, Margery," he began, "what are you getting Polly all upset for? I think that it's a shame the way you've thrown her over for Bunnie and Harry Richards—what you can see in that nut Harry puzzles me! Why don't you cut it all out?"

Margery stared at him in astonishment and anger. "S-Sam Bennet," she stammered, "I—I think you're the rudest boy! I——" she stopped and spinning round on the stool, put her elbows on the counter and buried her face in her hands.

Sam stood silent; perplexed. What had made Margery turn her back on him like that? Suddenly comprehension smote him, and his knees trembled and his breath grew

short. He had the true masculine horror of tears and far rather would he, at that moment, have faced all the bears of his original offer to Polly than one curly-headed slip of a girl. The screen door banged and Sam looked anxiously over his shoulder; some one might come in and see that he had made Margery cry. It proved to be only a barefoot urchin who put a penny in the chewing-gum machine and went out, his jaws working violently. Sam gave a sigh of relief and cleared his throat.

"Have a soda, Marge?" he asked, trying to speak casually.

There was a pause. "No thank you," said Margery finally in a tense, small voice.

"It's a pretty day," ventured Sam, huskily.

Margery apparently felt no interest in the weather.

Sam cleared his throat again. "Great Scott, Marge," he exploded, "I'm mighty sorry. I didn't think you'd take it like this. I ——"

The druggist appeared with the prescription neatly wrapped. Margery took it, paid for it, and with a nod and pleasant reply to the

man's comment on the weather, moved toward the door. Sam followed her.

"See here, Margery," he essayed again.

Margery turned and faced him; she had not been weeping as he had thought, but her eyes were dark with anger and her face was very white.

"I am hoping to go away, Sam," she said quietly and coldly, "with a friend of my mother's. I shall be most glad to go. You've all of you been hateful to me here in Renwyck's Town. I've tried to be nice to you,—and—and—to help you. I've tried to help Bunnie because she had no other friends—and Polly, who was my friend, turns against me! You've all turned against me. I hope I never have to see any of you again."

She stopped abruptly and went out, leaving Sam tongue-tied, planted on the other side of the screen door.

On the step Margery paused for an instant; long enough to hear the druggist say with amusement, "You got it that time, didn't you, Sam?"

"Oh, how horrid!" exclaimed Margery, turning on her heel.

"What say?" asked a tall, lanky countryman who had stopped to light his pipe; "was you speakin' to me?"

"Oh, no, not at all," answered Margery, and hurried down the street neither knowing nor caring where she was going. If she had been feeling hurt and disappointed before she encountered Sam, she was bitterly angry now.

"Margery," called Deborah's voice.

Margery started and looked about her vaguely.

"Here, dear, here," laughed Deborah, leaning out of the back seat of the old cut-under from the farm, which was drawn up close to the curb while Thomas made some purchases at the hay and feed store. "I've heard of people who couldn't see for looking!"

"Oh," cried Margery, crossing the pavement, "I didn't see you."

Deborah looked at her searchingly. "How are you, dear?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, *all* right."

Deborah leaned forward and thoughtfully picked off a loose thread from Margery's coat. Margery's whole air, her indifferent, unresponsive manner, the haughty droop to the

corners of her mouth recalled the girl she had first known. What had gone wrong?

"But you aren't all right, dear—I can tell that by looking at you."

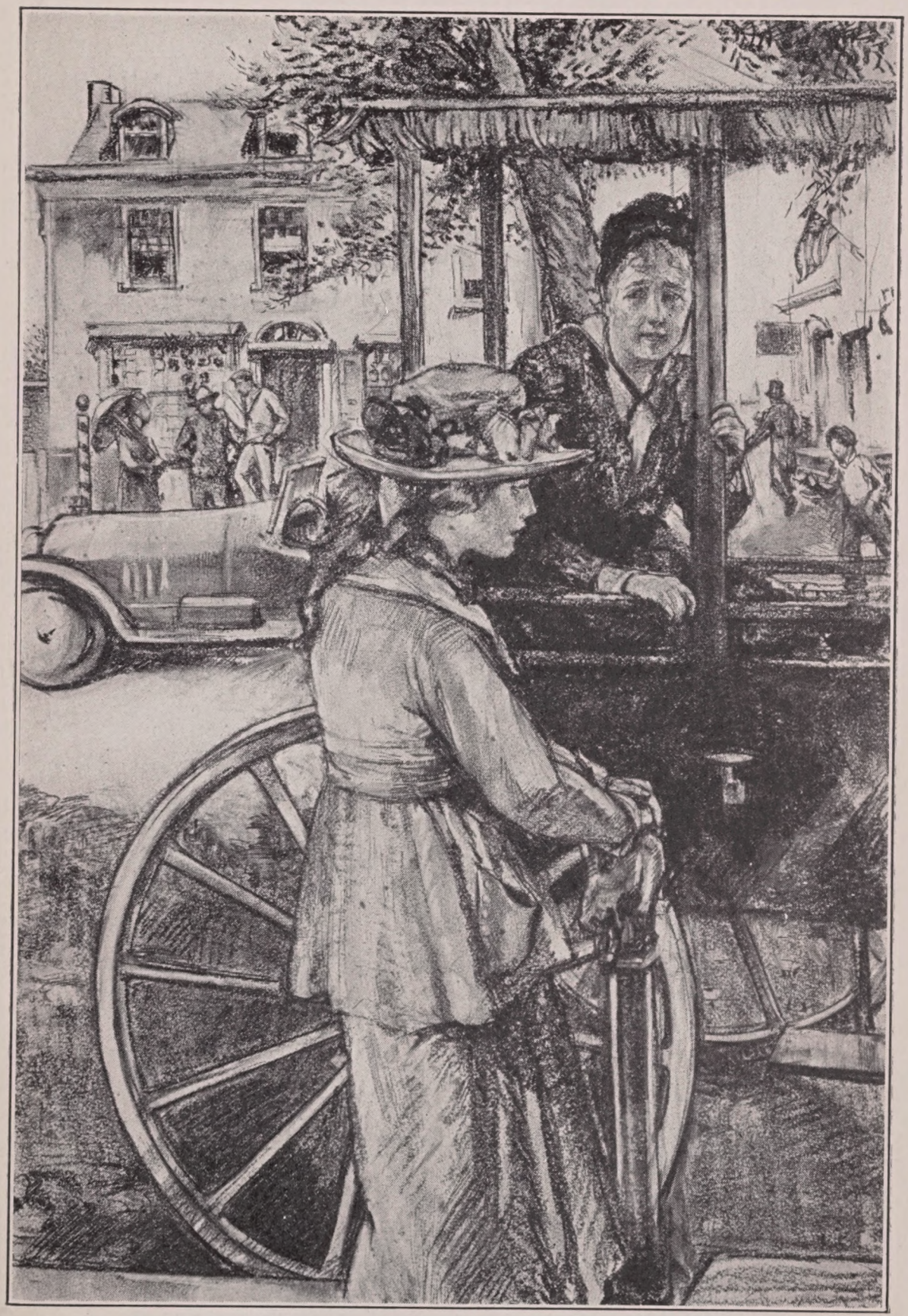
Margery flushed and the tears came to her eyes. "Oh, everything is horrid—and I'm so discouraged."

"Yes?" said Deborah softly.

But Margery evidently was not in a mood to be confidential. With her lips pressed tight together, she stood staring at the back of William Rufus.

Too wise to force confidences, Deborah smiled, and then sighed again. Although Dick was uncompromisingly loyal to Margery, and Bunnie seldom discussed her, Deborah had gleaned that all was not going well with her favorite. She thoroughly understood Margery; loved the frank, truthful nature, and pitied the pride and petulance that laid so many snares for the unwary feet. She had watched with loving interest her development this winter, her new patience and thought for others, and hoped that nothing would occur to mar her growth.

"Don't be discouraged, dear," she said,



"BUT YOU AREN'T ALL RIGHT, DEAR."

cheerfully, adding with a laugh, "You're a pretty good skater, aren't you?"

Margery opened her eyes. "Why—why?" she stammered, wondering if Deborah was going to ask her to go skating. It had been an unusually cold and rainy June, but still it was scarcely skating weather.

"Do you remember how you learned to skate—how you told Miss Tucker you were going to learn?"

Margery thought. "I don't see ——" she began. "Oh," she added with a sudden smile, "you mean by getting up every time that I fell down?"

"Yes," Deborah nodded, "that's it exactly. You learned to skate by getting up every time that you fell down. That's a pretty good way to take most things in life—just get up every time you fall down. Suppose you had gotten discouraged the first time you went down, and had just lain there until somebody came along and picked you up! A lot you would have learned about skating! The other day when I was dusting Mr. Morris's books I came across a verse. Wait a minute—I think I have it in my portmonnaie." Deborah drew out a little

black purse and opening it unfolded a little piece of paper. "Read it," she said, handing the paper to Margery.

Margery took it and read aloud ·

> "'"Fight on, my men," Sir Andrew said,
> "A little I'm hurt, but not yet dead,
> I'll just lie down and bleed a while,
> And then I'll rise and fight again."'"

She handed the slip of paper back to Deborah. "Yes," she said listlessly, feeling that she and Sir Andrew had very little in common; if he rose and fought again, she, for one, thought he was a big goose, and she herself was tired of fighting and struggling. "Yes," she repeated tonelessly.

"And now," said Deborah with a sudden change of manner, an anxious little frown appearing between her eyes, "are you going out to see Bunnie to-day?"

Margery's cheeks flushed. "No," she said decidedly. "I am not."

Deborah's frown deepened. "Oh," she said miserably, "I was in hopes that you were."

"Why?" asked Margery, surprised.

"Oh, I have to be away all to-day—I

promised Mrs. Holder to spend the day with her and help her get ready for her daughter's wedding to-morrow. They're counting on my being there—I'm to ice the cake and mix the chicken salad—but I don't feel a mite easy in my mind about leaving home. Benjie's got a wretched cold—this damp, cold weather's made it worse, and I always say there isn't anything harder to throw off than a summer cold—and then there's never knowing what crazy thing he will do next to get more chill. Mr. Morris and Dick are going to be away, too, and that leaves only Bunnie to look after him—and Bunnie's a poor person to count on. She can do fine at times—she's got the making of a real worth-while woman—but her mind is more on the boys just now—or rather, on Harry. I was just in hopes that you were going to be out there—I feel that you aren't such a fly-up-the-creek, and you're more to be depended on."

Margery transferred her gaze from William Rufus to Deborah's anxious face, and back to William Rufus again.

Here was some one asking for her help. But she knew what would happen if she gave

it; things would be certain to go wrong, and then she would have some more people to scold her and make her unhappy. It was all very well for Deborah to talk about getting up every time you fall down, but she knew better.

The town clock struck ten, slowly and languidly, as though it were bored by the necessity of having to strike at all.

"Oh, dear!" Margery exclaimed, rousing herself. "There's ten o'clock! And I was to go to Quaker meeting with Grandpapa at ten. I had to stop at the drug-store and get his medicine refilled and then I was to join him at the meeting-house. I forgot absolutely all about it!"

"Why!—does your grandfather go to meeting?" asked Deborah. "I thought that he went to St. Peter's."

"He does. But sometimes he likes to go to meeting. He used to go with his grandmother when he was a little boy. I'll have to run, now—good-bye!"

With a nod to Deborah still anxiously thinking of Benjamin and home cares, Margery cut diagonally across the wide shady

street, and turned into the still wider and shadier one on which stood the old, red-brick meeting-house where generations of the members of the Society of Friends, founders of the town, had worshipped.

"Grandpapa will have a fit if I'm late," she thought as she hurried breathlessly along, her griefs and worries forgotten for the moment. A quaint little figure ahead of her, attired in wide rustling drab silk skirts, drab shawl and poke bonnet, caught her eye. "Thank goodness," she panted, "I won't be the last one."

Breaking into a run, she caught up with the little Quakeress at the meeting-house gate, and falling into line back of her walked demurely into the building and slipped into the back seat on the women's side of the house.

The kindly, middle-aged Quakeress, beside whom Margery had taken her seat, glanced at her out of the corner of her eyes and smiled slightly. Margery's hurried breathing and the damp little curls around her forehead told their own story; the Quakeress had children and grandchildren of her own and she knew how easy it is to be late to meeting.

Edging a little along the seat she handed Margery her neat little black fan which by pulling the string opened out of a short black stick.

Gratefully, Margery took it and as she lifted her warm curls from off her neck and fanned her heated face, she glanced about her.

Meeting had begun, and there was no sound in the big cool building beyond the occasional rustling of a silken skirt and the twittering of the birds outside in the giant tulip-poplar tree that spread its huge arms protectingly over the roof. The side doors were open and the sun, appearing after a week of cold rain, stole softly in and touched a bowed head here and there and gilded the worn old benches.

A bee came in by the side door, droned slowly in a circle and out again as he had come. The silence grew deeper and Margery, fanning herself slowly, scarcely dared to breathe. Finally from one of the raised seats facing the meeting one of the ministers rose and spoke briefly on faith and patience. With a sigh, Margery dropped her hand into her lap. How much faith and patience had she? She recalled Deborah's words "Don't

get discouraged too early in the game." But Deborah didn't know, Deborah couldn't know how everything had gone wrong. Perhaps it was a little bit her own fault. Perhaps—a new thought to her—she ought just to have helped people when they needed it, and not tried to play Providence in their lives. Perhaps—but it wasn't any use looking back, and every one had been horrid, anyway. But after all, Deborah had always been kind to her, and dear little Benjamin—oughtn't she to help Deborah if she asked her to? Some one else in the meeting rose and spoke, but Margery scarcely heard, her mind absorbed in her own small problem. She had made up her mind never to do anything for anybody again; pride urged her to stick to it, affection urged her to yield. She started; the elders had shaken hands and meeting was over.

"Grandpapa," she said after luncheon, "I think that I'll go out to the farm this afternoon—Deborah invited me to go."

She repented her decision when she reached the farm. Repeated callings failed to discover any one; Mr. Morris and Dick she knew were both off for the day, and Bunnie and Benjamin

had evidently gone somewhere, too. Even Thomas was not about, although the front door was unlatched after the usual easy-going fashion at the farm.

Margery had told Walter to stop for her at five on his way back from Monroe where he was to take the car for some new parts, so with a disgusted shrug of her shoulders she selected a magazine from the collection on the library table and sat down to read.

But the silent, empty house oppressed her; she grew nervous and fancied she heard strange noises and mysterious movements. Tucking the magazine beneath her arm, she got up and went out on the portico. It seemed even lonelier here, and she strolled around toward the back of the house. Under the grape arbor over the side door she found a bench where some cushions had been left. Settling herself there with her feet up and the cushions luxuriously behind her head she went on with the story she was reading, an uncanny, unpleasant tale of the body of a man caught in the crevasse of a glacier. Shuddering, she turned the page and read on, absorbed.

Suddenly she stopped, and raising wide, startled eyes, listened. There was a sound, a strange menacing sound she had heard once before and never forgotten.

CHAPTER XXII

AT THE FARM

Some one was strangling, a dreadful, croupy strangle. In a flash, Margery remembered Deborah's concern about Benjamin.

"Benjie! Benjie!" she called. "Where are you, dear?"

There was no answer. She tried to open the side door but it was bolted from within. After a violent shake or two of the door-knob, she drew back and began to call loudly at the open up-stairs windows. "Hello, up there! Hello!"

No one answered, and she commenced to search through the bushes by the house. Some small animal might be in pain; one of the kittens choking on a fish-bone, perhaps. She could find nothing, but as she straightened up and paused irresolute she thought that she heard the noise again.

"Benjie!" she called anxiously. "*Benjie?*"

Still worried she ran around to the front door. There continued to be no response to her calls, and with a little gasp of relief she remembered that Benjamin had not been about when she arrived at the farm that afternoon. No doubt, she decided, he was playing with some of his small friends.

"I must be growing nervous," she thought with self-disgust, sitting down on the hall sofa and picking absently at a worn place in the old haircloth covering. "I do detest nervous, twittery people who are always thinking that they hear queer noises and getting scared. It would certainly be a good thing for me to go away from Renwyck's Town and have a change."

She started and listened again. She wasn't imagining things. There *was* a noise!

It came from somewhere in the second story, of that she felt positive. Up the stairs she ran, tripped and fell, and finished the rest of the way bent double, her hands on the step in front of her like a child.

At the top she straightened up. The coughing seemed to come from Bunnie's room.

Running down the passageway leading from the main house through the south wing, she threw open the door and almost fell over something lying on the floor.

"Who is it?" she cried, catching her breath.

The shutters were closed and the room in darkness. Kneeling, she passed her hands over the object on the floor; her groping fingers met a shock of short curls and she knew that it was Benjamin.

His feet and legs were soaking wet as though he had slipped into the creek, and he was strangling and gasping with the croup.

"Benjie, oh, Benjie!" she exclaimed. "It's Margie, dear."

He did not answer, and the dreadful strangling went on.

Stumbling over the shoes and clothes left lying carelessly on the floor, Margery opened the shutters. The wild disorder of the room revealed Bunnie's reason for closing them. Sweeping a half-trimmed hat and a pile of ribbons and artificial flowers from the counterpane, she dragged Benjamin to the bed, and stripping off his wet shoes and stockings

rolled him in the quilt. Bending over him and vainly trying to rouse him, Margery realized that he was very ill.

Her heart sank. Alone in the big, empty house where was she to get help?

And while she waited Benjamin would die.

Almost as though in answer there came to her mind the remembrance of the day when little Helen Crowell had been so ill with the croup and old Martha had brought her round. Her heart beating wildly, Margery stood still, trying to remember each separate thing that Martha had done, and rehearsing her own plan of action. Benjamin's fate lay in her hands, she knew; and she must work.

Afterward Margery never could tell just what she had done. She knew that her feet, working automatically, had taken her down to the kitchen, and that she had found herself coming up-stairs again with a kettle of hot water in one hand and a box of mustard in the other. She remembered, too, standing before Deborah's well-ordered medicine cabinet, just as a little later she had stood before the telephone, demanding that "central" give her Dr. Huston. Fortunately the telephone

girl was quick-witted and obliging, and supplying the number, which Margery forgot to give, connected her at once. Like part of a bad dream Margery knew that she was told by the doctor's maid of his calling on Miss Patty Kirkby, and like another part of the same dream she heard herself asking central for Miss Patty, and then a voice answering hers, "Yes, the doctor is here. I will call him at once."

The relief was so blessed that Margery could scarcely control her voice sufficiently to tell the doctor what had happened and to answer his questions as to what she had already done. He approved, asking with a whistle of surprise how she had known what to do, and with some further directions, he promised to be there as soon as possible.

Margery hung up the receiver and went back to Benjamin. The means she had used had brought relief and he was much easier, but she felt sure that he was still very ill and he plainly was exhausted. Again she tried to remember all that old Martha had done for little Helen Crowell, and recalling that she had wrapped her in warm blankets, went in

search of more covers. From the cedar chest in the hall she brought two big down quilts and the great heavy army blanket that Dick had used on several camping expeditions, and piled them all on top of Benjamin until the poor child lay in nearly as much danger of suffocation from heat as from croup.

An automobile came up the driveway and Margery ran to the window, hoping against hope that the doctor had borrowed somebody's car. To her disappointment, she saw Harry and caught a fleeting glimpse of Bunnie's gay striped skirt as she alighted. Harry climbed out after her; but having put down a can of something on the portico he got into the car again and drove off.

The screen door banged and Bunnie went swiftly through the house to the kitchen.

"Bunnie! Bunnie!" called down Margery, opening the back stairs door.

Bunnie's footsteps ceased abruptly and there was not a sound from the kitchen.

"Gracious, it's hot down there," Margery thought as she stood waiting. "I wonder if I ought to take Benjie down where it is so

much warmer. Bunnie," she called again, "won't you come up? Benjie's very ill."

Still there was silence, then the faint sound of cautious footsteps tiptoeing across the floor.

"Bunnie, oh, Bunnie!"

"Oh, all right. In a minute," Bunnie's answer came unwillingly. "Don't bother me now."

"Well, you needn't come if you don't want to," thought Margery indignantly, going back to Benjamin. "But I think that's a horrid way to act to your little cousin."

She sat down on the bed beside the child, and began to rub his chest again with the goose grease she had found in Deborah's medicine cabinet. He roused a little, and opening his eyes smiled at her.

"I feel better, Margie."

"Yes, dear—but don't talk now."

The heavy eyelids closed again and Benjamin seemed to sleep.

Margery, crouched on the big old four-post bed, looked down at the childish face against the pillow, and tenderly noted the long eyelashes lying against the white cheeks, the tangled crop of short curls damp now with

the effort of his breathing. Suppose, she thought, her chagrin had kept her from coming to the farm that afternoon, what would have happened to that well-beloved little friend?

She poured more goose grease into the palm of her hand and rubbed it on Benjamin's chest as vigorously as though she were trying to rub away all hurt and bitter thoughts from her own mind. The room was peaceful and still, with no sound but Benjamin's breathing and the ticking of a little clock on the bureau. Margery's foot went to sleep and as she pinched and prodded it, she leaned forward and watched the road as it wound across the fields and through the woods to the town. The doctor was not yet in sight. It was very quiet and restful in the big, old-fashioned room after the strain she had just been through, and she felt rather tired and sleepy.

Suddenly there was a startled cry from the kitchen, the sound of a chair being overturned, then piercing screams of "Margery! Help me! Quick!"

Frightened, Margery ran to the door, just as Bunnie, her arms seemingly a mass of

flames, came screaming up the back stairs, rushed into the room, whirled around like a mad thing, and rushed out again.

For a moment Margery, too, lost her head, and clinging to the door-jamb, shrieked her loudest.

Then forced for the second time in one short hour to face an emergency, she dragged the heavy woolen blanket from the bed and ran after Bunnie. The flames had been fanned by the wild dash through the house, and the desperate girl was frantic with fright and pain as Margery caught up to her at the head of the stairs.

"Lie down, Bunnie!" she commanded.

Bunnie only shrieked again, and tossed her blazing arms above her head.

"*Lie down!*" Margery's tone was fierce.

For once Bunnie obeyed. With a moan she tumbled on the heavy carpet, her arms outstretched. Holding the blanket firmly in both hands, Margery fell on her and beat out the flames.

White and exhausted, Margery sat up at last. Her own hands were burned and the curls around her face were singed, but she did

not realize that until later. Bunnie groaned and raised her head. "Get the oil," she whispered. "On the sideboard."

Fortunately there was oil in the old cut-glass bottle, and soft napkins in the sideboard drawer. Faint and exhausted, Margery seized them and ran up the stairs again.

"The kitchen's on fire, too," Bunnie gasped, between paroxysms of pain.

Margery, looking in horror at the poor arms and the long strips of burnt kid clinging to them, scarcely heard her.

"Yes, yes," she murmured.

But Bunnie was insistent. "I put the house on—fire—and Grandpa will kill me—I disobeyed ——" she stopped, half fainting.

Fire! Ominous word to Margery who had once been staying at a mountain hotel that burned down. No one had been killed, but she never had forgotten the horror of seeing the great sheets of flame sweep past her window.

Panic stricken she jumped to her feet in a wild impulse for flight. But stronger than her terror was the thought of Benjamin. The smoke was pouring up the back stairs as she

rushed into the room and seizing him in her arms, quilts and all, staggered down into the front hall with him.

"Get up, Bunnie," she called back. "Get up, or you'll burn to death. Oh, Bunnie! *Get up!*"

"Margie," Benjamin roused and tried to wriggle out of her arms, "there's smoke—I smell it."

"Yes, dear, yes," she sank down on the lowest step. She must put Benjamin on the portico—surely he would be safe there—and then, as soon as she could find the strength to move, she must go and make Bunnie come down.

"Margie—there's smoke."

"Yes, dear—oh! what's that?"

There was the sound of voices on the front steps, loud, cheerful voices, and Dick and Sam Bennet came stamping into the hall.

"Hello, Marge—you here? Great Scott, what's the matter?"

"Fire! The house is on fire!"

"Where?" shouted Dick.

A great wave of smoke came down the stairs and Margery, choking, could scarcely

answer. "The kitchen," she gasped. "But wait, Dick! Don't go yet—Bunnie's burned!"

"Where is she, where ——" Dick started off.

Margery thrust Benjamin into Sam's arms. "Dick, no, no," she implored, catching him at the dining-room door. "She's up-stairs! Help me to get her down first!"

As she spoke, Bunnie, sobbing with terror and the agony of her burned arms, came swaying down the stairs. The boys, seeing that she was still alive and able to walk, hastily fastened their coats over their heads, and dashed into the kitchen.

Margery would have followed them, but Bunnie, collapsing upon the sofa, clutched her hysterically.

"Oh, Margie—don't leave me! Oh, my arms! My arms! They hurt so! Can't you do something for them, Margery?"

There was shouting, loud steps on the portico, and Dr. Huston rushed in, followed by the farmer and several men from the fields.

"Great goodness, children," he shouted, "the house is on fire!"

Bunnie threw herself back on the sofa. "Oh, doctor, doctor," she wailed, "stop it, oh, do stop it burning!"

Margery stood up. She felt very old and tired and stern. "You're needed in the kitchen—the fire's there," she said firmly to the men. "Doctor, Bunnie is badly burned."

The doctor bent over Bunnie and examined her arms anxiously. "Get more oil, Margery," he ordered, "and see if Deborah has any lime water."

Bunnie, calmed somewhat by the doctor's presence, raised her head. "There's more oil in the bottom drawer of the sideboard," she murmured.

The dining-room was filled with smoke, and Margery had to feel her way to the sideboard. In the kitchen those who were fighting the fire were shouting and running backwards and forwards. That part of the house was old and a fire once started would spread rapidly. The water supply at the farm was inadequate, and Margery knew that the thought of fire was an ever present terror.

"What *do* people do in fires?" thought Margery, dazed. "'Roll them on a barrel;

expand the lungs'—no, that's for drowning. Oh, yes, they save things."

Clutching the bottle of oil under her left arm, she opened the silver drawer of the sideboard and holding her skirt as a bag piled Mr. Morris's much valued old-time forks and spoons into it, and blundered her way through the smoke to the hall door.

In the hall she found that the doctor had taken command.

"That's right, Margery—give me the oil. I've taken Benjamin into the parlor. Go in there and keep him quiet. Somebody came in—I don't know whom—and I sent him upstairs to save what he can."

If action had been hard, inaction was harder still, and Margery, suffering from her hands, and struggling to keep Benjamin still, felt as though she would go frantic in the dim, quiet parlor. The endless minutes dragged on; the doctor came in and inspected Benjamin, bandaged Margery's hands, and went out again. Overhead she could hear footsteps, and from the kitchen the shouting of the fire fighters.

"Fire's out!" Eyebrows singed and face

black with smoke, Dick appeared at last in the doorway.

As he spoke there was the sound of wheels, and Deborah burst in, her bonnet on one side and her eyes wide with consternation.

"Children!" she gasped. "Is the house on fire?—Or has a maniac gotten into the house? Some strange man's throwing everything out of the second story windows!"

CHAPTER XXIII

"SHE'S OUR MASCOT"

THE rose garden at the White House Farm was next to his books Mr. Morris's greatest hobby. There were rare tea roses, and beautiful climbing roses that spread over trellis and arbor, and stately quaint rose trees standing haughtily about the sun-dial, reminding Margery always of the illustrations in a once-loved fairy tale book of hers. One of her duties was to cut the roses every morning and to fill the vases in each room, reserving the finest flowers to be sent to other rose-lovers. The week of rain had spoiled some of the blossoms, but the morning after the fire found it June weather again, and in the garden Margery discovered many a lovely bud just ready to open.

She felt very tired after the excitement of the day before, and her bandaged hands, while not especially painful, were inconvenient and

made her clumsy with her garden scissors. Still she was very happy in the warm June sunshine with the roses nodding about her, and she felt very different from the way she had done the morning before.

She was thankful, so thankful, that she had heeded Deborah's wishes and gone to the farm. Suppose that there had been no one there when Benjie lay gasping, or when Bunnie had set herself on fire! Poor Bunnie; disobedience had been promptly punished in her case. Always fearful of fire, her grandfather had forbidden her to use gasoline for cleaning. The more Bunnie was forbidden to do a thing, the more anxious, as a rule, she was to do it; and when her grandfather and Deborah had gone she had seized the opportunity to have her own way. Harry had been pressed into service, and together they had bought the can of gasoline and taken it to the farm. After Harry had gone back to the town to keep an engagement, Bunnie had rushed to the kitchen and begun a hurried cleaning of her collection of white gloves and light ribbons. She had been extremely careful and all had

gone well, until, in her anxiety to get every evidence of her occupation quickly out of the way, she had put on a pair of long white gloves still wet with gasoline and stood waving her arms over the red hot stove.

The gloves had taken fire at once, and in her pain and fright Bunnie had succeeded in upsetting the can of gasoline and in putting the sink and the old mahogany table next to it on fire. Nothing but the fact that the heavy old table had burned slowly with more smoke than fire, and that the woodwork had been well water-soaked from the constant splashing of the spigots had saved the house.

As for Bunnie herself, her pretty arms were badly burned and would be scarred for many a long day. Her physical sufferings had been acute; her mental sufferings had been nearly as bad. For conscience had told her that her careless neglect of Benjamin and failure to keep the trust reposed in her had almost had a most serious consequence. She was a very miserable and unhappy girl that night, and only by means of the opiate left by the doctor had Deborah been able to get her to sleep.

After he had given full directions as to

Benjamin and Bunnie the doctor had insisted on driving Margery home himself, and not letting her wait for Walter and the car.

"I think this little girl has had excitement enough this afternoon," he said, "and the society of the dull old doctor ought to quiet her nerves and make her sleepy."

On the way home he had told her that Miss Patty was to be married soon to Duncan Patterson. "The gossips had her engaged to me," chuckled the doctor, all-unconscious. "Who but some silly, senseless woman would cook up a thought like that!" Margery had winced; then recovered somewhat. It was evident, she had thought, that the doctor had not "gone and fallen in love with Miss Patty, and mixed things up some more;" that was some comfort.

"It was hard on Patty, though," went on the doctor cheerfully, clucking to his horse, "for it got back to the ears of Duncan and the young man was jealous." He stopped and laughed, highly flattered that a man so much younger should have been jealous of him. "That made it rather hard for Patty, as I was saying. But as the proverb has it,

'the wells of joy are dug with the spade of sorrow,' and news of the rumpus having reached Susan Phipps, Patty's aunt, she has made up her mind to come and look after her mother and lift the burden from Patty's shoulders. A thing she ought to have done long ago, for she has a little money, enough to pinch along on here, and no other ties. But she was companion to a wealthy woman who travels, and that was more interesting. However, to come to the point of my story—Miss Patty dropped hints about you and Polly being bridesmaids at her little wedding, so you'll have to get some more color in your cheeks than you have been having lately. I am afraid there has been too much of Kiley's rich cake between meals, and not enough oatmeal for breakfast. I——"

Margery, relieved, and it must be confessed a trifle triumphant, had assented dreamily to the ensuing long lecture on hygiene. She had started to help Miss Patty, and she had done it, although not as she had intended. Anyway, they could stop scolding her now.

"Yes, indeed—I promise to eat a whole one every morning," she said hastily, as a pause in

the doctor's voice warned her that he expected an answer.

Not until he laughed and then explained, did she realize that the course of his lecture had taken him from big plates of oatmeal to Indians and their lore, and that it was a Redskin brave that she had been promising so earnestly to eat every morning.

Rapidly recalling all that the doctor had said about Miss Patty, Margery reached with her scissors for a lovely Caroline Testout bud nodding above her head. She hoped, as she laid the rose carefully in the basket, that she and Polly would carry big bunches of pink blossoms like that when they were Miss Patty's bridesmaids. What fun it would be! If only—her face clouded—if only Polly were not so unfriendly.

There was the sound of an automobile coming up the drive, and Margery, climbing on a bench in order to see over the high garden hedge, caught sight of Harry in his little car.

She jumped down hastily, upsetting the roses. "Bother," she thought, scrambling them back into the basket and pricking her thumb on a thorn. "Bother! What does he

have to come for? Just as I was having a nice time out here by myself, why does he have to push himself in? I hope Sarah won't know where I am."

Her hopes however were not to be realized; by the time that she had gathered up the last rose she saw Sarah bustling down the path from the house, Harry keeping discreetly in the rear. Margery hastily hid behind a tall mock-orange bush and peeping round it tried to shoo Sarah back.

Sarah stood still and stared. The "bhoys" in her mind were always to be eagerly welcomed and she could see no reason for Margery's frantic signals.

"Whatever is the matter wid yez, Miss Margery?" she called. "Is there anything the matter that ye're hidin' behind that bush? Mr. Harry's come to see you."

Remarks that were perfectly audible to Harry, of course, so there was nothing to do but come forward and greet him, while she attempted to appear unconscious of Sarah.

If Margery's manner was constrained, Harry's was more so. He was embarrassed and seemed to have trouble in managing his

hands and feet. "I've come to say good-bye, Margery," he stammered at last, after she had talked rapidly and shyly about roses and the weather. "I'm going away to-morrow."

"Going away? Why, Harry, where?"

"I'm going to try to make good."

Margery was puzzled. "You mean you are going to school again—but there's no school now?"

"I'm going to work, for the present. One of the boys at school wrote to me and said he was going to take a job for the summer—a job with his father. There was a place for me, too, he said, if I wanted it. And I didn't want it then—but, well, things you said rather got me—and yesterday, too. Everything combined made me feel I was pretty trifling. So I start in next week. I won't make much, but perhaps it will help to pay Mother back some of the money I've wasted."

"Oh, isn't that fine!" cried Margery, cordially. "I'm ever so glad! Of course you'll make good."

"Then, I'll come back and go to school here in the fall. Maybe if I make good they'll take me—they wouldn't before, you know."

Not knowing exactly how to reply to this, Margery was silent.

"I—well—Margery, I think I ought to thank you for the tongue-lashing you gave me."

"Oh, Harry, I didn't mean to be rude—I—I was just trying to explain."

"You weren't rude—you were honest, that's all. But it woke me up, and made me face—what I really knew all along, only I didn't want to acknowledge it—that I was acting like a cad to Mother. Besides, if I was such a trifling, good-for-nothing gump that nice people wouldn't have me at their houses—it was time I changed. And then came yesterday—that got me, I can tell you! Well, good-bye, Margery. I hope you have a jim-dandy summer. Think of me sometimes, punching the time clock."

They shook hands cordially and parted.

As Harry left Margery picked up the basket of roses and went slowly and thoughtfully into the house. She put the roses in a big stone crock of cold water and took them down into the cellar to "harden" before they were to be arranged in the vases; then, her work

mainly done, she ran up-stairs to her room. From the desk by the window she drew out the letter she had written to Mrs. Endicott and deliberately tore it into tiny pieces.

"Miss Margery," Sarah appeared at the door, "Mister Dick's down-stairs. He says Miss Bunnie wants to see you."

Margery flew down the steps. "What's the matter, Dick? Is Bunnie worse?"

Dick grinned cheerfully. "Oh, no,—she's a little better. We just had a talk this morning, and when we got through she said she wanted to see you,—that's all. So I thought I'd stop for you—it wasn't out of my way. She wanted to see Polly, too. I wasn't told why," and Dick grinned again, mysteriously.

Driving through the pleasant country lanes sparkling after the rain, they discussed the fire and the things that had led up to it.

"It certainly was lucky for us—and for Benjie—that you were there," said Dick gravely, for the little brother was very dear to him; "you've been a regular mascot to this family."

"Dick!" Margery's tone was tragic. "*Never* use that word to me."

Dick was astonished and a trifle offended. "Why not? What is there about the word mascot to offend your highness?"

Margery paused. "Well—if you promise not to tell a soul," she said hesitatingly, "and not to laugh ——" She paused again; Dick she knew by experience had a comfortable, common-sense way of taking things. Besides, he was there at the moment and willing to listen, and she needed a confidant. "Well—promise you won't laugh?"

Dick did laugh as she finished her story, a hearty, boyish burst of laughter that brought an answering smile to Margery's lips in spite of herself.

"You poor kid," he said, struggling to stifle his amusement. "I guessed something was wrong, but I didn't think it was that bad. Why didn't you tell me before?—oh, I see, you felt too bad about it before, but yesterday made you feel better. Well, you certainly did get yourself up a tree! I must say you have a genius for that!"

Margery acknowledged this tribute to her ability with becoming modesty. "You can see," she added wearily, "why the word

mascot is too much for me. Please never use it again in my hearing!"

"I mayn't be able to help it," Dick said gravely, although his eyes twinkled. "But I promise you it won't be more than once."

"Well, just once," Margery conceded, privately wishing that Dick would stop trying to be funny.

"But do you know, Dick," she went on after a pause, "I can see now that the way to help people is just to help them when they need it—not to try to play Providence in their lives. That's where I made my mistake—I tried to take people's lives and run them."

"I guess that's where lots of people make their mistake," Dick said sagely. "That's the trouble with a lot of charity—people don't really want to help other people—they want to own them and boss them."

They turned in at the gate of the farm, and once more Margery found herself driving down that familiar avenue of pine-trees. On the portico she could see Benjamin, recovered enough to be up and about the house, hopping up and down on one foot in his impatience. Behind him stood another figure.

"Polly!" thought Margery. "Oh, dear!"

The carriage stopped at the steps and Margery got out slowly. She felt unequal to facing Polly just then. "Well, Benjie dear," she said, holding out her bandaged hands to the child, and trying to smile at him, "how are you feeling to-day?"

But Polly, who had been having a long talk with Bunnie, was as impulsive in her repentance as she had been in her anger. "Oh, Margery Daw," she cried, running down the steps and throwing her arms around Margery's shoulders, "Bunnie's been telling me how you saved her life, and Benjie's too, and put out the fire and everything! And Bunnie's been telling me—oh, lots of things! And, Margie—I'm sorry I've been such a gump. Will you forgive me?"

Margery choked. For a moment she stood battling with pride—Polly had hurt her, should she be forgiven so easily? There was a pause, and Polly stood waiting.

Then, without a word, she quietly slipped her bandaged hand through Polly's arm and pressed it affectionately.

Polly turned to Dick, busily unloading

packages from the carriage and elaborately oblivious of the little scene between the two girls. "Aren't you glad and thankful, Dick," she asked, "that Margery came to Renwyck's Town? What should we ever have done without her?"

Dick threw a teasing glance at Margery. "Yes," he said, and Margery felt a kindly, deeper meaning under his light tone, "she's our mascot."

The Stories in this Series are:

MARGERY MORRIS
MARGERY MORRIS, MASCOT
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